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ABSTRACT

This collection was gathered from a seminar entitled "Education and Leisure in North European Urban Spaces," which was the result of cooperation between the Sports, Leisure, and Tourism Work Group of the International Union of Architects and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Papers were given by experts on education, community architecture, and inner city projects, including the greening of redundant industrial areas and disused sites and designs for revitalization. Papers are: (1) "An Historical Perspective" (Geraint John); (2) "Rotterdam: Strategy for a City of the Future--'From Working City to Leisure City'" (S. Rijpma); (3) "The Role of Sport and Physical Recreation in Regenerating Part of Glasgow--The Glasgow GEAR Project" (Ivor Davies); (4) "Small Community Sports Centres" (Chris Harper); (5) "Greening the Community Landscape" (Dee Stamp); (6) "Children Design and Build for Play" (H. Meyer-Buck); (7) "Design and the Community: The Open Air Classroom" (Martin Madders and Chris Royffe); (8) "Good Practice in Inner City Leisure Provision" (Sue Glyptis); (9) "Recycling for Play" (David Stone); and (10) "Summary" (Geraint John). An appendix describes the Sunningdale (England) Community Development program. (SLD)

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EDUCATION AND LEISURE IN NORTH EUROPEAN URBAN SPACES

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A Seminar organised as the result of co-operation between the Sports, Leisure and Tourism Work Group of the UIA and UNESCO

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EDUCATION AND LEISURE IN NORTH EUROPEAN URBAN SPACES

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the result of a seminar held in London on 13th April, 1989, entitled ***'Education and Leisure in North European Urban Spaces'***.

It was the result of co-operation between the Sports, Leisure and Tourism Work Group of the International Union of Architects and UNESCO.

The papers were given by experts in Education, Community Architecture and on inner city projects including the greening of redundant industrial areas and disused sites. Their approach ranged from the broad, strategic approach to a city's problems - and schemes to involve the whole population in its re-vitalisation - to the detailed application of design on specific leisure, sports and greening projects.

This report will range from the wider topics of discussion - papers on strategic work in Rotterdam and Glasgow, two river cities with broadly parallel demographic, industrial and commercial histories - to more 'tactical' and 'hands on' programmes and projects.

GERAINT JOHN - UK SPORTS COUNCIL

CONTENTS

- **AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**
  Geraint John - UIA SLT Work Group

- **ROTTERDAM: STRATEGY FOR A CITY OF THE FUTURE - 'FROM WORKING CITY TO LEISURE CITY.'**
  S Rijpma

- **THE ROLE OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL RECREATION IN REGENERATING PART OF GLASGOW - THE *GEAR* PROJECT**
  Dr Ivor Davies

- **SMALL COMMUNITY SPORTS CENTRES**
  Chris Harper - Architect: Sports Council

- **GREENING THE COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE**
  Dee Stamp

- **CHILDREN DESIGN AND BUILD FOR PLAY**
  H Meyer-Buck - Architect: West Berlin

- **GOOD PRACTICE IN INNER CITY LEISURE PROVISION**
  Sue Glyptis: Loughborough University

- **RECYCLING FOR PLAY**
  David Stone

- **SUMMARY**
  Geraint John

- **APPENDIX**
  SUNNINGDALE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Geraint John

The legacy of the Industrial Revolution in Europe remains with us to the present day. The centre of England was known as the Black Country - because of the pall of smoke that hung over it and the blanket of coal dust and soot that covered it - in the heyday of the Industrial Revolution.

The following quotation is taken from *'Nice Work'* by David Lodge:

"Rich mineral deposits were discovered here in the early nineteenth century: coal, iron, limestone. Mines were sunk, quarries excavated, and ironworks sprang up everywhere to exploit the new technique of smelting iron. The fields were gradually covered with pitheads, foundries, factories and workshops, and rows of wretched hovels for the men, women and children who worked in them: a sprawling, unplanned, industrial conurbation that was gloomy by day, fearsome by night. A writer called Thomas Carlyle described it in 1824 as "A frightful scene .... a dense cloud of pestilential smoke hangs over it forever .... and at night the whole region becomes like a volcano spitting fire from a thousand tubes of brick." A little later Charles Dickens recorded travelling "through miles of cinderpaths and blazing furnaces and roaring steam engines, and such a mass of dirt, gloom and misery as I never before witnessed." Queen Victoria had the curtains of her train window drawn when she passed through the region so that her eyes should not be offended by its ugliness and squalor."

The situation was typical of the Industrial towns all over the Northern Europe during the time of the Industrial Revolution ...

THE SITUATION TODAY

Of course things are not like that now. But the industrial dereliction left behind after those times has affected the development of towns and cities. Those who could afford to, moved away; the old industrial cities are places of poor housing and living conditions. It is that legacy which leads us to look at the ways in which improvements can be made. Much has been done, but a great deal remains, and of course people's aspirations are continually rising.

THE WAY FORWARD

The following are some of the ways in which the quality of life for those who live in deprived areas can be improved:-

1. Greening the city

   There are many examples of areas which have been successfully landscaped and 'greened'. A new kind of city ecology can be created, eg, around canals and to rehabilitate old industrial sites, to provide a 'green lung' for the cities and areas for play and education.

   There are also landscaping projects which make use of education sites for school and community use - to encourage a love and understanding of nature, and areas for outdoor play.

2. Upgrading and Rehabilitating Buildings

   The revitalisation of city areas can include re- habilitating old buildings which are now redundant. By retaining familiar buildings, it is possible to create a sense of continuity and 'place' for residents, while providing new activities and amenities.

3. The 'Community Architecture' Approach

   This is a new approach for architects, working with the community to save old buildings and to create the kind of environments that people want, rather than the imposition of inhuman architecture imposed from outside. Modern facilities can be created with the active involvement of the community.

4. New Activities and ideas

   New improvements in The Quality of Life are not only created by new and rehabilitated buildings, but also by new activities and amenities.

   - There is an interest in 'street arts', bringing arts activities to the community at all levels of performance.

- New initiatives in education are trying to establish partnerships with local businesses. This is an attempt to rejuvenate local interest and co-operation and provide educational opportunities for the whole community.

- Adventure playgrounds and play areas, with new approaches in leadership and play opportunities for all.

- The upgrading and landscaping of large and inappropriate sixties housing schemes bringing a new humanity to those areas.

- New sports and recreation facilities provide a healthy, active and educational life-style for all.

These new approaches can help to uplift and give new heart to deprived communities. There is no simple approach, but a reservoir of new ideas and concepts which can apply in different circumstances, all with the close involvement of the communities they serve.

* * *

ROTTERDAM: STRATEGY FOR A CITY OF THE FUTURE

"From working city to leisure city."

S. RIJPMA

Organiser of the Rotterdam conference 'Cities for the Future' and a researcher in the City of Rotterdam's Sport and Recreation Department.

Rotterdam has always been seen as a working city, a port where there is a lot of well-paid work available, but a city to live in ... No thanks.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, when the economy was booming, those who could afford to choose where they lived, moved to the outskirts of the city. It was the time of suburbanisation and the formation of 'new towns', something well-known in Britain. But for many, there was less choice; there were those who could not afford to move.

Rotterdam contained many poor, working-class neighbourhoods. The city was very one-sided in its economy - totally dependent upon the port's trade, which began to diminish at a time of transition - and one-sided in its wealth. A close parallel could be drawn with the industrial cities and ports of Britain.

This pattern of emigration to the suburbs was partly balanced by immigration of a new workforce, people from former Dutch colonies and Mediterranean countries, such as Turkey and Morocco.

At the same time, the foundations of the Dutch Welfare State were laid - all manner of facilities were developed for the poorer inhabitants; as in other countries, faced with similar social and demographic transition, the first conflicts arose between different communities, primarily over housing-problems.

The present Dutch Government - the Social Democrats - achieved an overall majority in 1974 and since then have carried out an ambitious programme of city-regeneration and consolidation of the existing welfare policy. A large-scale renewal of old inner city neigbourhoods gained Rotterdam international attention and recognition. But despite this, the city still continues to lose 10,000 inhabitants each year; which has built up to a cumulative loss of about 200,000 in the last 25 years.

"BUILDING FOR THE NEIGHBOURHOOD"

The city programme of 'Neighbourhood' projects - a social housing programme - has concentrated on the renewal and building of houses for

the existing inhabitants, which has kept rents low. Thus, Rotterdam consolidated the working-city image. Little or no attention was paid to the attractiveness of the city as a whole, to the loss of middle-class inhabitants and to the way in which the whole city functions and the changes in its labour market.

The economic recession at the end of the 1970s killed the demand for unskilled labour in the city, something which was fairly universal. This recession also made it necessary to reduce public expenditure, as a result of which, expenditure on all kinds of welfare facilities were reduced.

The current demographic situation Rotterdam is as follows:-

- about 570,000 inhabitants within the city boundaries; about twice that figure in the immediate region
- Rotterdam has lost 25% of its population and 50% of its youth
- about 20% of its population is unemployed
- about 15% are immigrants

"THE FUTURE OF THE CITY IS AT STAKE!"

There has been a recent, rapid turnover in thinking about the city and its functions. A new belief in the city was born. There was a growing awareness of the opportunities available and the potential to develop. Revitalisation, became the new trend. The thoughts turned more to the future, rather than dwelling on the problems of the immediate past.

Rotterdam formulated a new overall plan for the inner city with central goals, such as:-

- renew the relation between the inner city and the river-front (to replace the traditional harbour functions which had shifted West towards the sea).

- increase the attractiveness of the inner city.

- attract the higher income groups back to settle down in the city again.

Leisure and tourism were seen as key issues for the development and implementation of these ideas.

Rotterdam will change from being a working city into a leisure city. Still, Rotterdam wants to stay as a thriving port, but also wants to become a city which residents and visitors consider worthwhile to live in and to visit.

Two reports (produced in 1987) helped to create a broad support for the revitalisation of the city. All their central ideas - new plans for employment, housing, the harbour, or sports and recreation - are linked with this new way of thinking about the city.

Even in the working neighbourhoods, once such a powerful party in the formation of city policy, there is a feeling that there are new ways in which progress can be made. The influence and power of the of the neighbourhoods has shifted more to the political centre. The old methods of influence - demonstrations, occupations, etc - are no longer effective and there is a real tendency for residents to want to take part in the revitalisation too.

The key for the transformation lies, it is believed, in one word. "Pride."

The negative way of thinking about the city has been turned to a new, positive way of thinking - make the most of your opportunities and potential.

On a city-level, there is a noticeable level of pride in what the city can achieve, in its civic planning, in the organisation of international events - the world record was broken in the Rotterdam marathon, for instance. People sense that it is worthwhile to work on the revitalisation of Rotterdam, to work and live in the city. Just being there ...

This same sense of pride is being encouraged in the various city neighbourhoods. People are being given the opportunity to create an indentity for their neighbourhood, to be proud of where they live. The same applies to the work-place, where people are encouraged to be proud of the work they do, the products and services provided and the organisation for which they work.

The city's leisure service, now called "Recreation Rotterdam", has been reorganised, rather, revitalised. It has widened the scope of its operation to include, not just sports and recreation facilities, but also many community centres and services.

The city began a programme of fund-raising and socially useful events - called "stunts". People were asked to come up with original, practical ideas, with the promise of City support to help them organise and carry out their stunts. There was financial support from the city, to the tune of 50,000 guilders (£18,000), for stunts selected by a judging panel of ten celebrities.

Many ideas followed. In the last year, ten of these have been executed. Some of the more spectacular ones have been:-

- the largest choir of elderly people (650 people sang together)
- a free breakfast in community centres (4,000 people)
- knitting a cap for the town hall tower (16 sq m, 350 people)
- repeat showing for elderly people of the City's commercial film festival
- introducing neighbourhood radio

All these actions were easily organised, with no shortage of support and sponsors.

It is not so much the stunts themselves which are important, but the way in which they brought people together, let them experience the collective strength and enjoyment in the organisation of all kinds of happenings.

And it had some positive results:-

- new activities started in the community centres. They started their own "stunts" or repeated others (eg, free breakfasts for the needy).

- the idea of revitalisation has indeed been taken up on neighbourhood level. The City Council gave money to support their efforts and to set up a special group.

- The neighbourhood community centres are engaged in the organisation of the special programme of 1990 activities, the year in which Rotterdam celebrates its 650 birthday.

Also, it is planned to initiate a continuing programme of new activities to maintain and enhance the feelings of neighbourhood indentity and pride. One example is as follows:-

- increasing knowledge about the culture of ethnic minorities.

Nine community centres will give exhibitions, each highlighting the music, dance, art and general culture of a specific ethnic group. It is hoped that these events will:-

- improve acceptance by the neighbourhood inhabitants.

- the exhibitions will catch any prejudice 'by surprise' with the variety and interest on show.

- make people more aware of the contribution made by people of other cultures.

In June, Rotterdam will host an international conference, with the title, 'Cities for the Future', sub-titled, "The Role of Leisure and Tourism in the Process of Revitalisation".

The conference will examine the following themes:

- the potential of cities as an environment for leisure and tourism, with special emphasis on industrial cities and ports.

- leisure and tourism as a vehicle for economic development.

- conflicts between different cultures and lifestyles as they exist in large cities.

- development of integrated leisure policies.

As a continuous thread (rode draad) throughout the conference, it is intended to include discussions about the conflict between the internationalisation of revitalisation and the preservation of local identity.

* * *

THE ROLE OF SPORT AND PHYSICAL RECREATION IN REGENERATING PART OF GLASGOW

The Glasgow GEAR Project - DR IVOR DAVIES

By the mid 1970s, the Eastern Area of Glasgow was in such decline that comprehensive renewal was needed - the provision of opportunities for play, sport and physical recreation were part of that process.

The social, economic and environmental problems afflicting the Eastern Area of Glasgow by the mid 1970s cried out for action on a massive scale.

The population of the section of the city, designated the Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal (GEAR) Project, had declined dramatically, from 150,000 people in 1951, to 45,000 by 1978. In age structure, the population was almost a reversal of the norm -

- Fewer (23%) young people (of Strathclyde Region 29%)

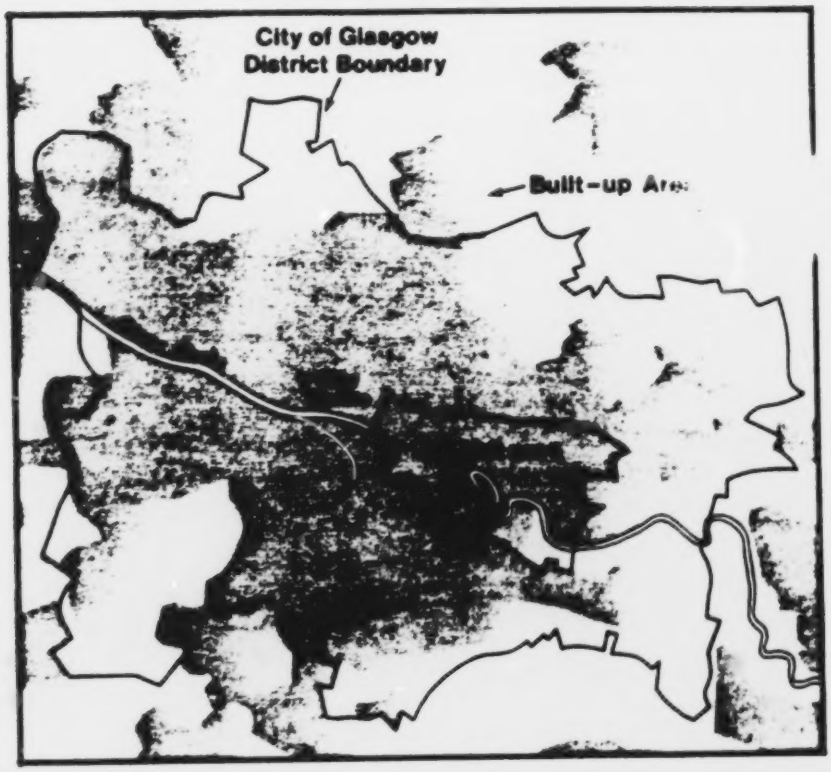
- More (20%) senior citizens (of Strathclyde Region 15%)

Unemployment was high and much of the younger workforce was unskilled and in low paid jobs. The more mobile and competitive sectors of the population had left, taking with them the drive and energy that might otherwise have been available for local efforts and enterprise.

The Eastern Area had been in the van of 19th century industrialisation. The mid 20th century run-down in traditional industry had reduced local employment prospects and resulted in vacant land, vacant premises and a landscape of industrial decay. Completing the circle of decline, housing conditions and the level of local amenities was poor.

Not suprisingly the Area exhibited the familiar features of poor health and high crime rates, with vandalism one of the more obvious symptoms of the latter.

The stage was set for the GEAR project: the joint planning of this single area of Glasgow by central government and seven participants ranging from national agencies to local government. The object was the comprehensive social, economic and environmental regeneration of the area. In plain words, the objective was to restore the Area's fortunes, to make it a place in which people could and would want to work, live and play. A complex system of actions and reactions would be needed.



MAP OF GLASGOW SHOWING GEAR AREA

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Industry would have to be started up in the area or be attracted to it. Thus employment would be created for local people and others from outside might travel there for employment. Industry would start up and might be attracted if the environment was improved and if a trained workforce was available.

A wider circular process would operate also. A regenerated Eastern Area of Glasgow would contribute to the overall improvement being sought for the City. This was perhaps epitomised by the promotional campaign run under the slogan of "Glasgow's Miles Better"; while a rejuvenating City might attract investment, some of which might be channelled into the further regeneration of its Eastern Area.

The early perception of the joint planning effort was that the provision of play, sport and physical recreation facilities might ameliorate social deprivation and contribute to environmental improvement; this was confirmed in consultation with local residents. They expressed concern over problems associated with crime and vandalism; a lack of shops; the appearance of the area; and the lack of entertainment and recreational facilities. Residents of all age groups thought that the 10-19 year old age-band was the worst off for facilities. Three quarters of those consulted identified the types of facilities needed.

In descending priority terms these were:-

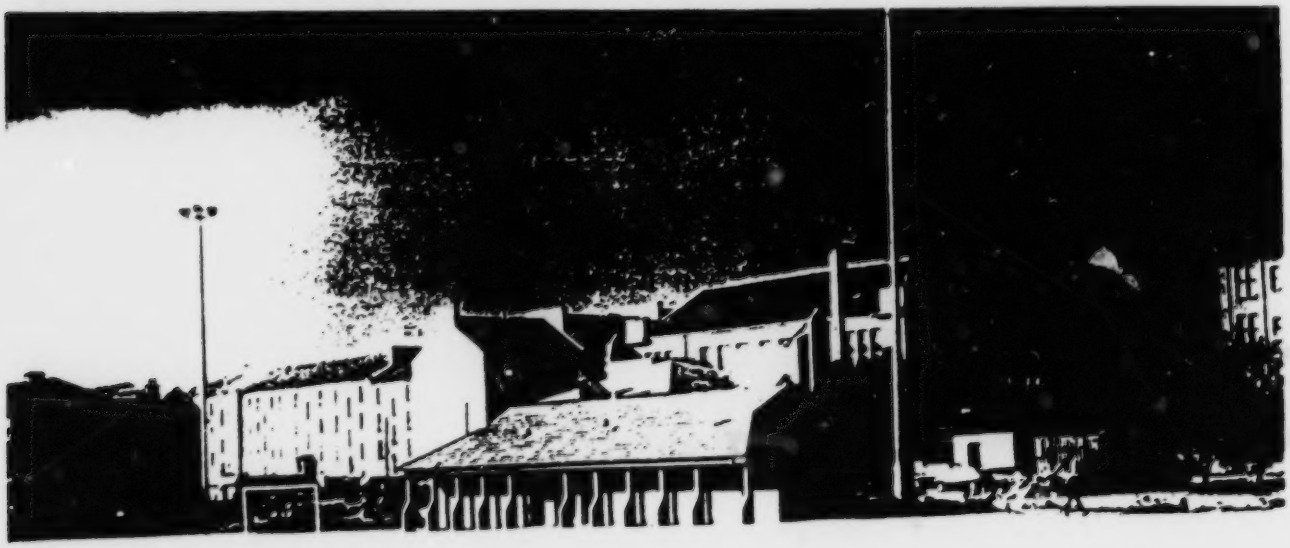
- Sport centres (25% of all respondents)
- Youth clubs (18%), entertainment facilities (10%)
- Parks/open spaces (8%)
- Play centres (7%)
- Football pitches (6%).

The ensuing provisions for play, sport and physical recreation ranged from major to minor projects and encompassed new construction and refurbishment.

The major facilities comprised:-

- The installation of a floodlit, open- textured synthetic grass pitch at an existing recreation ground (Helnevale Park)

A "vandal proof" community centre with fortress-like appearance.



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- The completely new installation of a major athletics facility, with rubber-crumb track surface and appropriate changing and back-up facilities

- A dual use new building (at Eastbank Academy) including a games hall and gymnasium.

In the first two cases, the facilities have been used and used well, by local residents; regularly by those living further afield; and, also, occasionally for national/international events.

These high-cost, high-technology constructions were complemented by medium-sized projects, namely the conversion of two existing baths to mini-sports centres.

The initiative was completed by the development or improvement of a spread of pitches (usually shale), parks and play areas and open space.

In retrospect, this provision certainly contributed to a general improvement in the area's appearance. However, the local residents' responses to, and use of, the facilities varied enormously. In general terms, informal, unsupervised facilities have fared badly, indeed, they have been the targets of vandalism. Facilities provided for organised activity have done better - where there has been strong leadership and motivation.

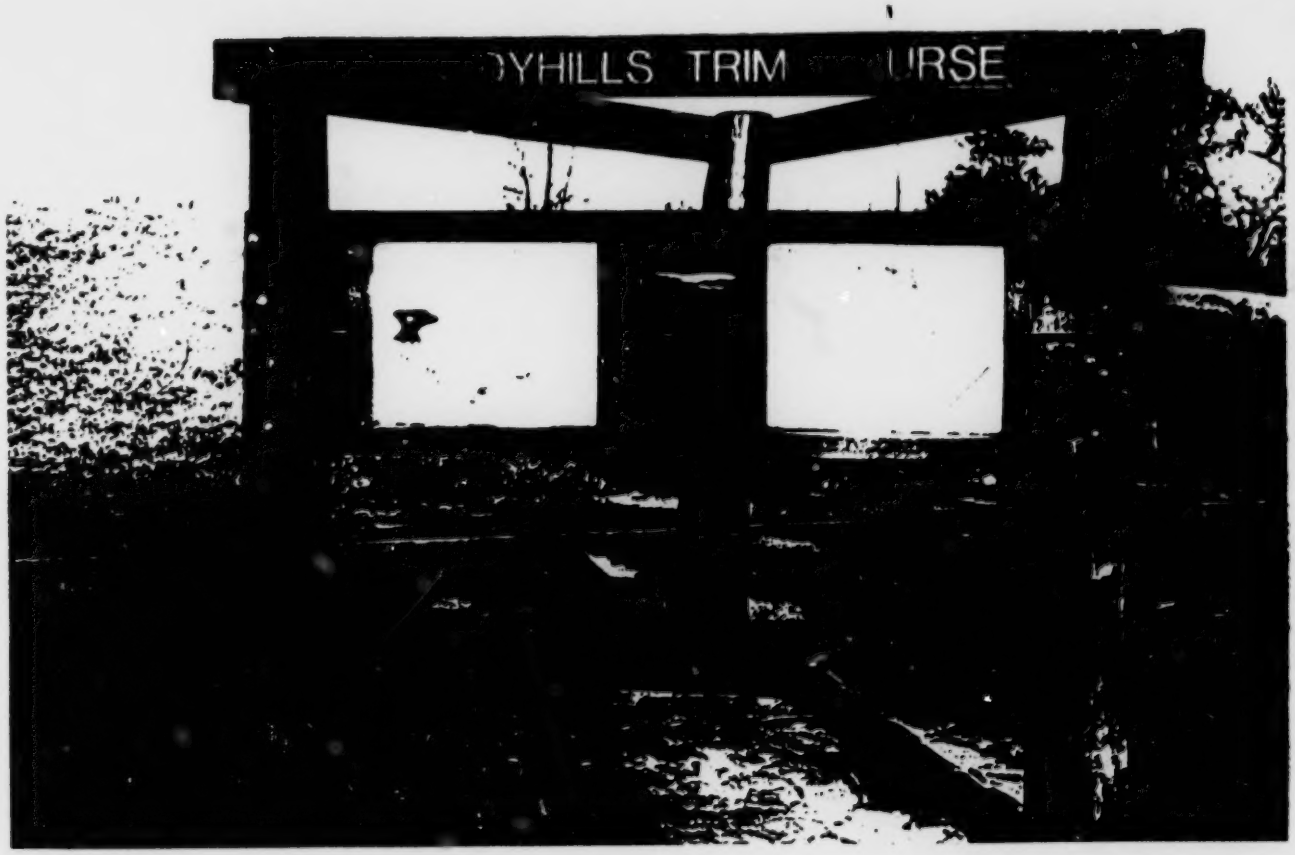
With hindsight, it could be said that the provision of unsupervised facilities for informal activity was incompatible with this environment and would probably be much the same in other similar areas.

We would argue that the range of facilities was broadly correct - including the facilities for informal activity - because it represented a response to local residents' perceived needs.

It would be unrealistic to expect a transformation overnight of peoples' attitude and behaviour, or within even, say, ten years. More likely, it could take a generation or so for such a transformation to take place. But positive decisions need to be taken now, even though they might, initially, appear misguided.

Mounting-experience of areas such as GEAR has confirmed how important it is to provide leadership as well as facilities: to introduce people to sport by holding, for example, come-and-try sessions; to assist in

Promoting The City's Fitness testing programmes in GEAR.



A TRIM Course developed in a new urban park. The notices have been the subjects of many acts of vandalism.

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the development of skills by providing coaching. In short, there needs to be promotion, organisation and the imparting of knowledge.

This was addressed in several ways in GEAR and one programme, that provided and monitored under the Scottish Sports Council's Actionsport Scotland initiative, is illuminating. Actionsport Scotland operated sports development teams throughout Scotland, with the objectives of assisting community development through participation in sport and assisting those taking part to move to permanent employment.

Over the 18 months of operation (1987-1988), the team in GEAR organised 1117 sessions targeted at: under 16s, 50+, women, handicapped and disabled people and the unemployed. The 30,043 participation units logged (1 participant for 1 hour = 1 participation unit) reveal the variable success of the targeting: the male:female ratio 42%:58% (of national average 60%:40%); and 56% were under 16 years old. The GEAR project was unsuccessful in attracting the unemployed, in contrast to its success in doing so in other areas of Scotland. Seasoned observers in GEAR believe that an ingrained tradition of unemployment has developed in the area, which also might be linked to confidence-building and directed at gaining employment.

Consequently, low use and even mistreatment of some newly-provided facilities simply emphasise the scale and nature of the task of regenerating the fabric of areas such as GEAR and bringing about changes in attitude and behaviour. Fabric renewal can be accomplished rapidly. Social renewal occupies a long time-scale.

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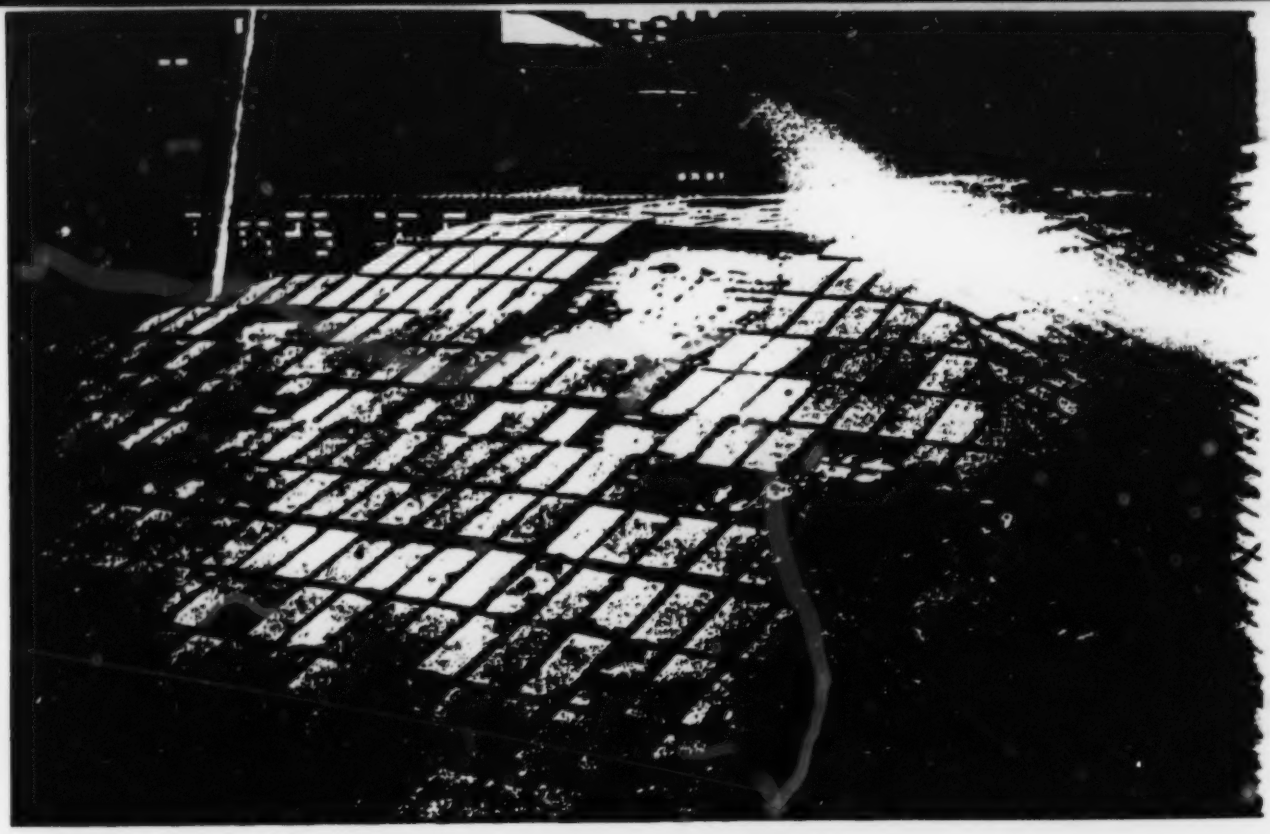

A play area subjected to vandalism: Poor specification may have helped.

The same play area: a tipping for rubbish.

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SMALL COMMUNITY SPORTS CENTRES

CHRIS HARPER - Architect; Sports Council

In 1983 the Sports Council had just begun its standardised Sports Hall programme, taking as its yardstick, urban communities with a catchment of about 25,000 people and rural communities, eg Rochford Essex. The aim of the programme was to develop a basic, flexible, relatively low-cost design which could be simply adapted for use in any community of similar scale, with a need for a central sports facility. This was seen as providing an accessible community facility for sport and recreation - a Nursery for Sport:

The design was based on one primary specification, taking into account the requirement for every community centre to provide different (preferably segregated) uses, in three areas - main hall, sports space and lounge. The inclusion of a bar is also considered an important element of all successful community and sports centre design, both socially and for the extra revenue such a facility is likely to generate.

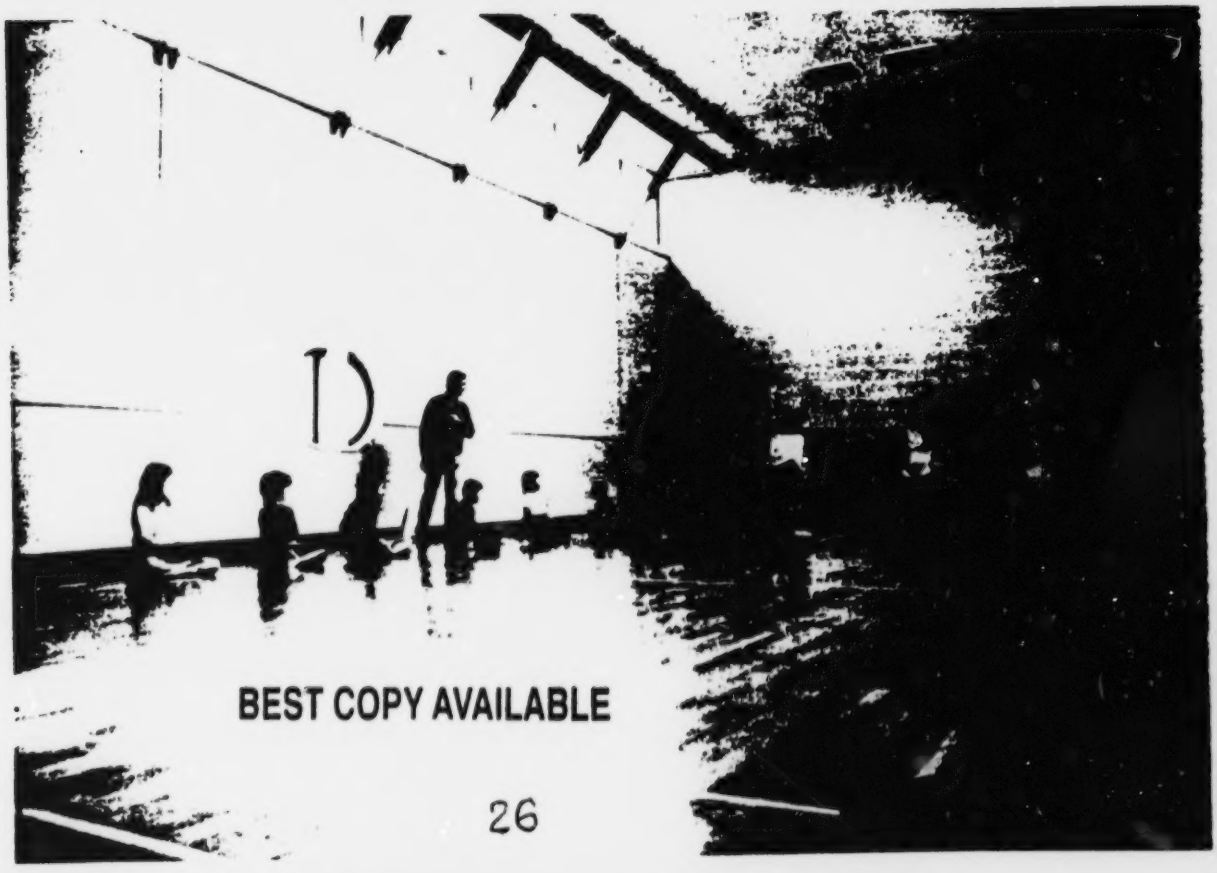
The Sports Council assembled a multi-disciplinary design team which assessed other centres. One prime consideration was that such centres are generally the product of a low level of funding, which sometimes dictates design choices which can detract from the finished product - for example, the inclusion of rooflights, or low-level roof structures, both of which are unsuitable for sports such as badminton.

What the team sought to achieve was a design which would, despite low-cost provisions, manage to achieve the following:-

- Cosy and Friendly Atmosphere - essential to encourage community use, but something which can be difficult to achieve when (low-cost) spartan finishes tend to be the norm.

- Storage- with space at a premium, often the last consideration in the design is sufficient provision for equipment and furniture storage. For multi-purpose use - including sports - the ability to clear the equipment and paraphernalia of one activity to quickly make space for another, is essential to the centre's success.

Markfield Community and Recreation Centre



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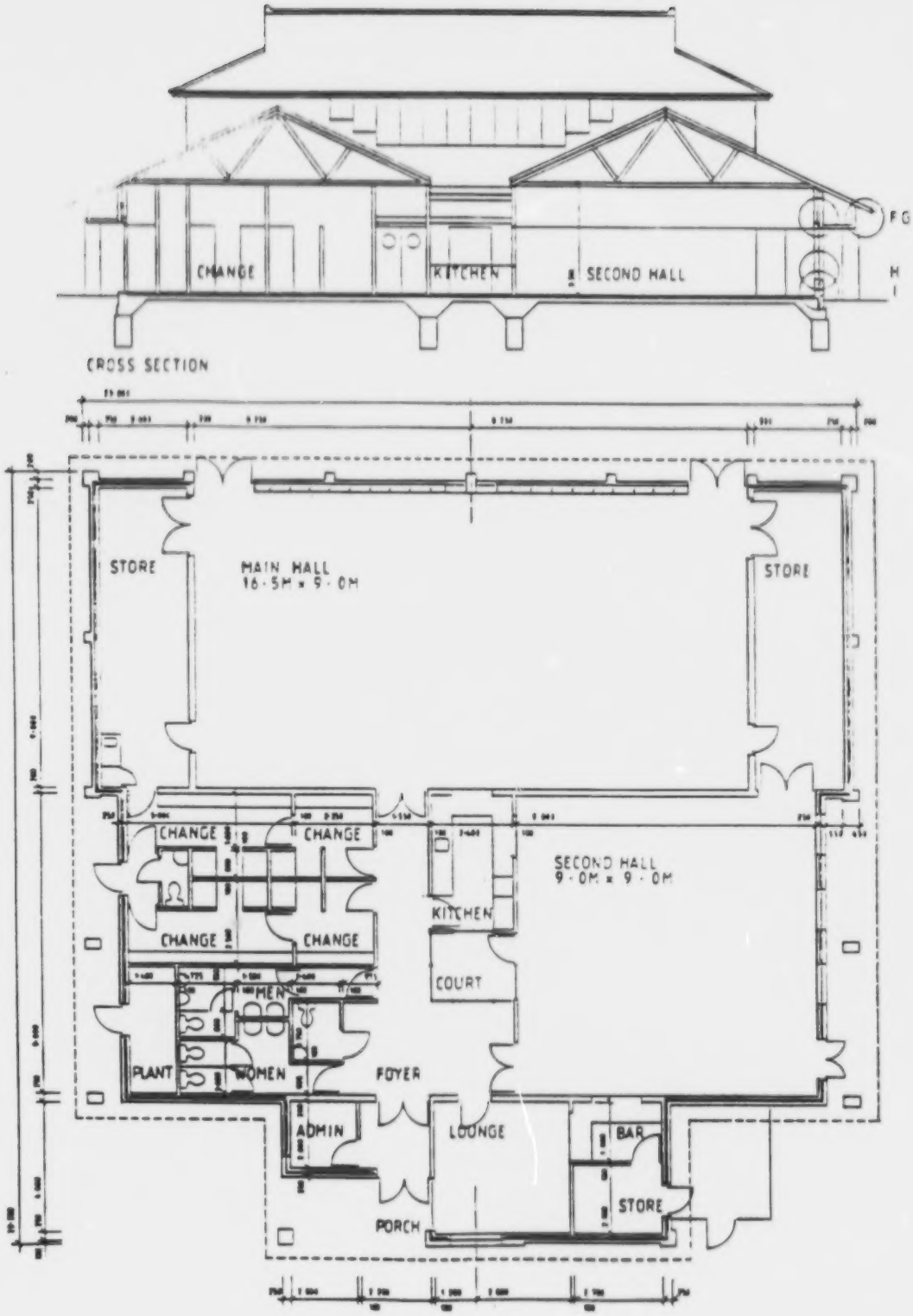


Markfield SCRC plan (dimensions)

- Balance of accommodation - to pr[illegible] best all-round schedule of accommodation within the appropri[illegible]nd economic constraints.

- Better Services - active sportsmen might not obj[illegible] cold, draughty halls, but the senior citizens' group whic[illegible] them will be looking for quick-response heating services. Different patterns and programmes of activity impose difficult loads on service systems, especially in low-cost installations.

The team began to devise a model brief, accepting that there can be no universal solution and that each building would need detailed adjustments and re-design to suit the specific needs of individual communities and the sites at their disposal.

Then on to design - based upon the smallest practical size for sports and other activities; a 9 m x 9 m hall was found to be the smallest practicable basic sports space. In resolving plan shapes, the linear form was more expensive, but has the advantage of being easier to extend.

Allowing for a typical 30% maximum of sports (as opposed to community) use in halls, it was decided to add extra outdoor areas for sports such as football.

To test the results of their research and development, the Sports Council offered to fund two demonstration projects.

Markfield, Leicestershire

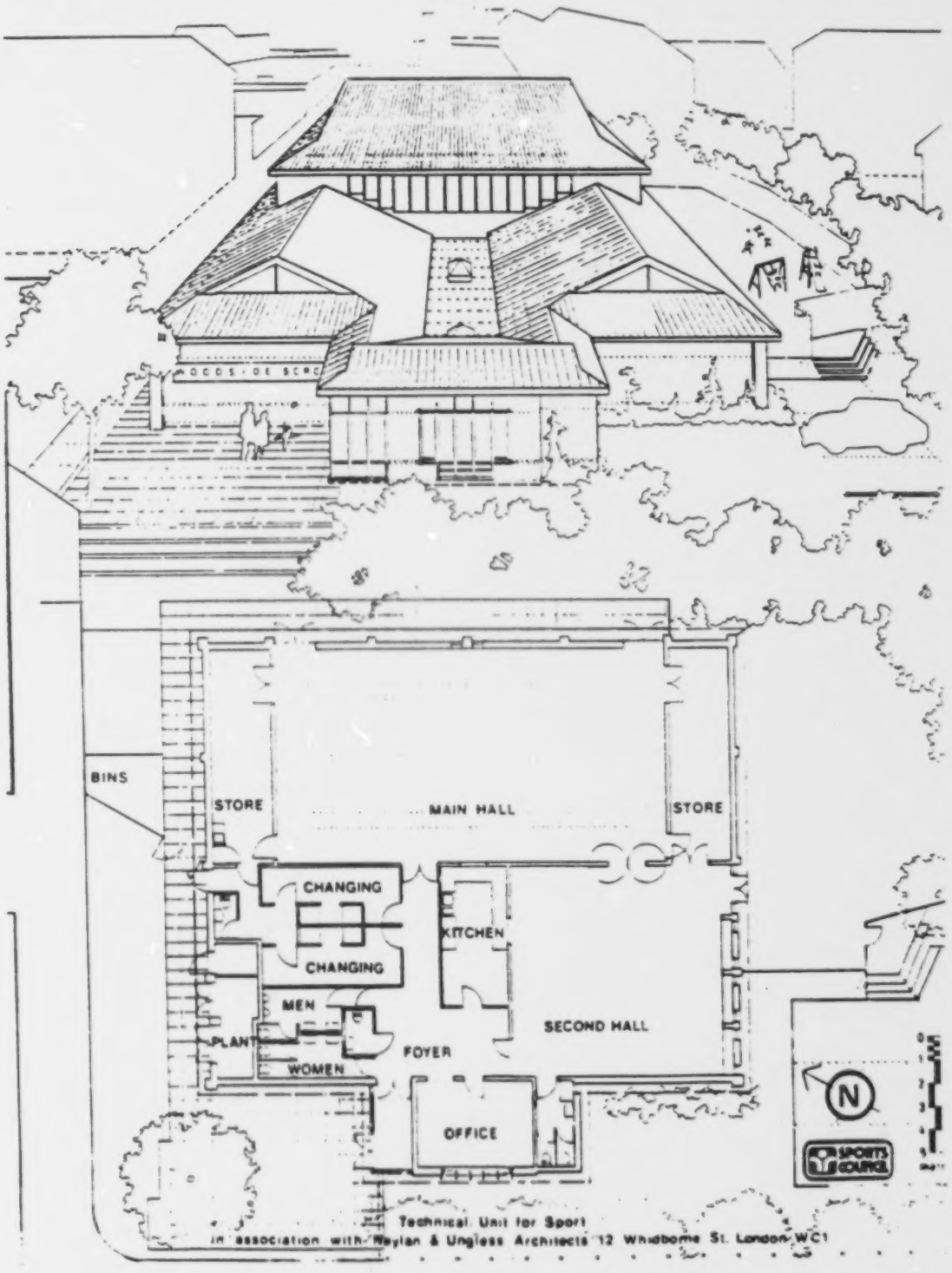
This was the first design project for a community with no provision for group and sports activities, certainly no competing facility.

No landscaping was included in the main contract - nothing, subsequently, was done! The Parish Council opted to include a children's playground. The first sketch plans were squared up, to give the most economical construction and make the buildings fit onto the small site.

On completion of the Markfield prototype, the team moved on to their next project, a very similar community and sports centre at Woodside, in Sheffield. There was a choice of two sites - one rather elongated, the other squarer.

The general design was very similar, but there was no provision for a bar and there was an all-weather pitch (to be shared with a neighbouring school). Finishes were chosen to be more resilient - eg,

WOODSIDE SMALL COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTRE



Sheffield Community Recreation Centre

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timber ceiling and timber rebound panels. A more 'external' consideration was the use of smaller bearing in mind the potential for vandalism, this being an ur Markfield.

The Markfield/Woodside design was lest viable sports/community unit. It is essential, despite to develop a design which achieves at least the basic req purpose use and can be cheaply, but well-constructed.

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Sheffield Verdon Street Community Recreation Centre

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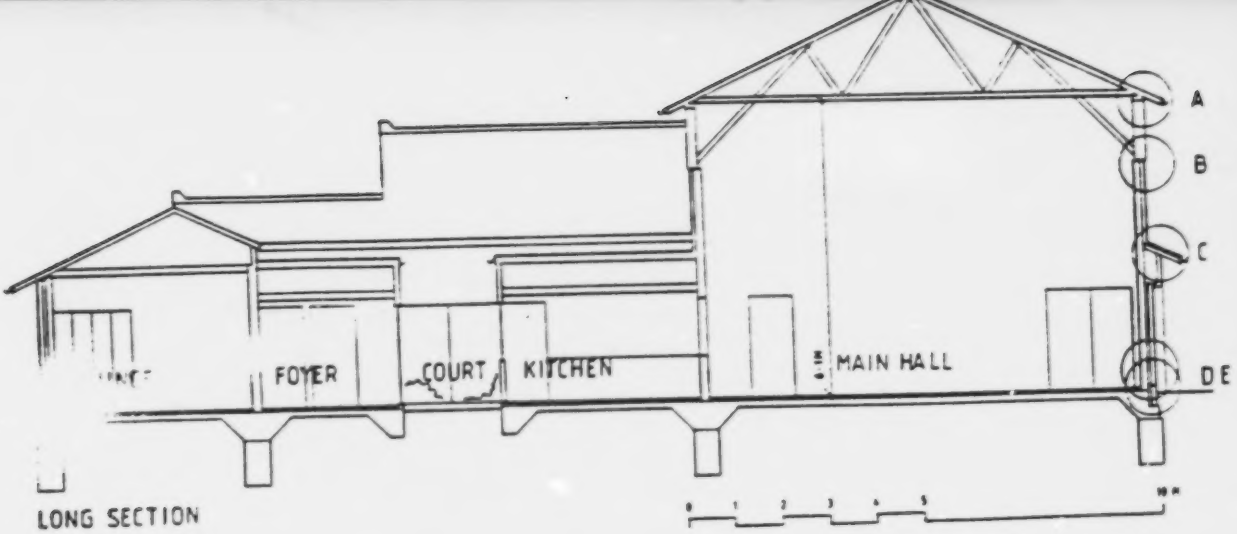
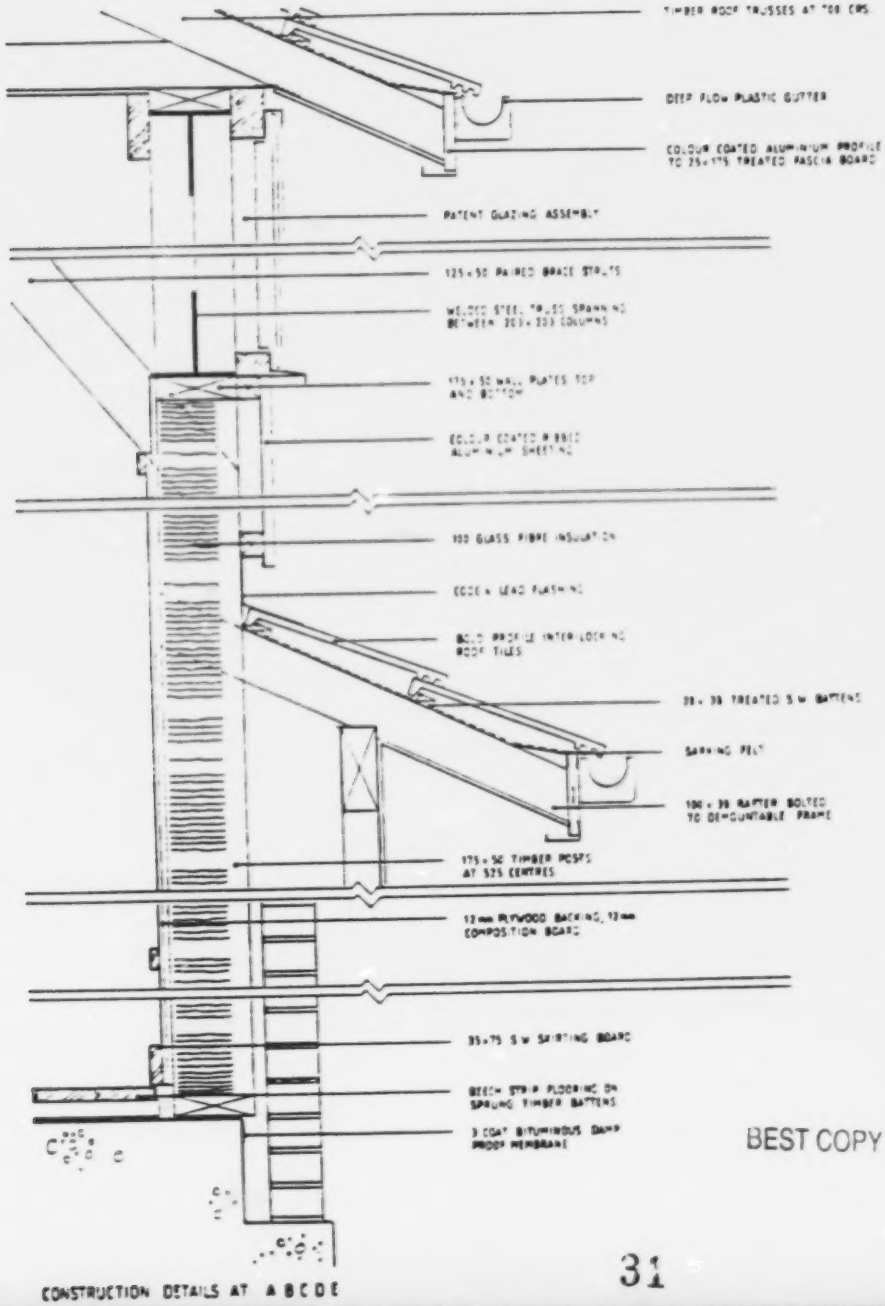


LONG SECTION


TIMBER ROOF TRUSSES AT 900 CRS
DEEP FLOW PLASTIC GUTTER
COLOUR COATED ALUMINIUM PROFILE TO 25x175 TREATED FASCIA BOARD
PATENT GLAZING ASSEMBLY
125 x 50 PAIRED BRACE STRUTS
WELDED STEEL TRUSS SPANNING BETWEEN 203x203 COLUMNS
175 x 50 WALL PLATES TOP AND BOTTOM
COLOUR COATED RIBBED ALUMINIUM SHEETING
100 GLASS FIBRE INSULATION
CODE 4 LEAD FLASHING
BOLD PROFILE INTERLOCKING ROOF TILES
38 x 38 TREATED S/W BATTENS
SARKING FELT
100 x 38 RAFTER BOLTED TO DEMOUNTABLE FRAME
175 x 50 TIMBER POSTS AT 525 CENTRES
12mm PLYWOOD BACKING, 12mm COMPOSITION BOARD
35 x 75 S/W SKIRTING BOARD
BEECH STRIP FLOORING ON SPRUNG TIMBER BATTENS
3 COAT BITUMINOUS DAMP PROOF MEMBRANE

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS AT A B C D E

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Markfield Community and Recreation Centre

Sheffield Community Recreation Centre

GREENING THE COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE

DEE STAMP

The demand for land and resulting problems faced tend to be very different in London from those elsewhere in the rest of the UK and certainly very different from those faced in Europe.

London has a surprising number of green oases within its essentially urban structure and fabric. Many of these are small and local, some formally created as open space; many are informal, the product of natural growth, or the result of local residents activity on otherwise unused land.

For many of these, it is the local people who seek to exploit their own, local spaces - and they should be able to determine how they use them and, more importantly, how they can create them from land which is, at present unused or unoccupied.

'Derelict' plots are being snapped up by developers - who seem intent upon turning London into their own vision of New York, with canyons of skyscrapers and no informal green space.

This often means the loss of land which has for years been unused (in commercial terms at least) - such as old bomb sites left from the last war - and has grown green. These sites tend to be enjoyed locally as rest and recreation areas, but the pressure for development now puts them under threat.

There is another source of derelict land, sometimes unrecognised as such, namely open spaces within poor-quality (often 1960s) housing estates.

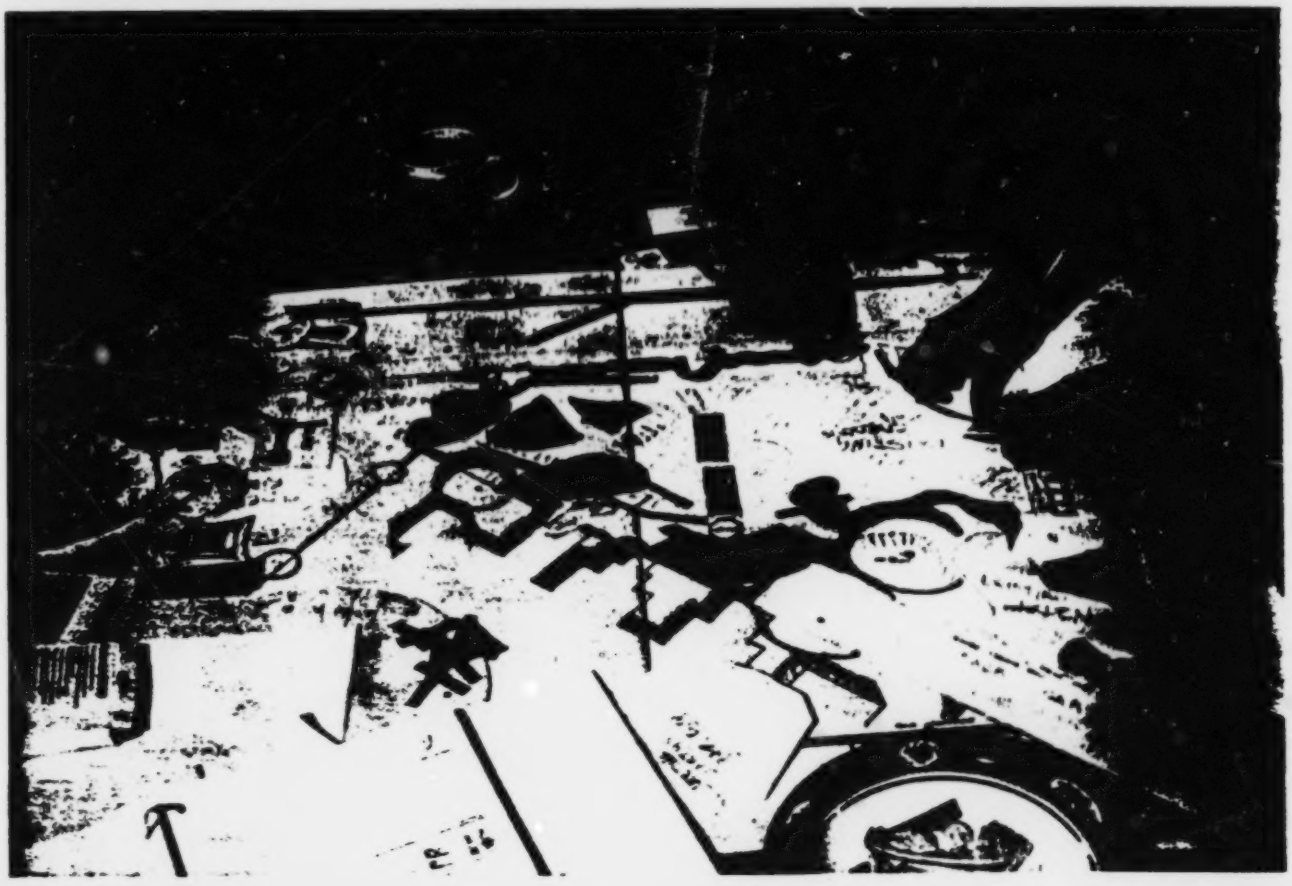
THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE PROFESSIONAL

Locals must have their say in what happens to their area and our practice only works in support of local groups. We want to help make their life better and are prepared to put time and effort into helping them as landscape design professionals.

However, the public perception of 'professionals' often deters people at this community level. If they overcome their reluctance to make an approach, they often come unwillingly, being scared that 'professionals' are simply going to dictate what they should do.

Therefore, it is our duty not to take the schemes and plans, the ideas away from them - there must be no 'fait accompli' presented from 'above'. If that happens, they feel that the scheme is not theirs any more. The

Infant children find the outdoor environment a fascinating adventure.



Design Game - detail

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Harlesford Road Community Garden: Vauxhall

Open Day - July 1986: Community Garden, using the CLAWS 'Design Game'

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end-product has to be the result of a si.. ·lvement between me - as the helping 'professional' - and them, the . who will live with and enjoy the new landscape. If you take a.. ·· from them, you take away their own enthusiasm and sense

Most such schemes are low-cost, low-tech, and si.. no reason why the 'professional' should feel obliged to deal - remotely and without local assistance.

CASE STUDIES

Vauxhall, South London

A plot of 1.2 acres of derelict land had been partly rescued and tended by a group of residents who had moved into squats in the area. A core of some 25 people enjoyed gardening and they wanted to enhance this plot of land for the general benefit of the area. So keen were they, that they had carried out their own feasibility study, which had been presented to Lambeth Council in 1986; their efforts had been rewarded with a £55,000 grant. To see how best to spend this windfall was one of the reasons we were invited to help with the project.

Our first initiative was to hold an Open Day on the site, with the idea of publicising what we were hoping to do there and so attract more local residents into getting actively involved.

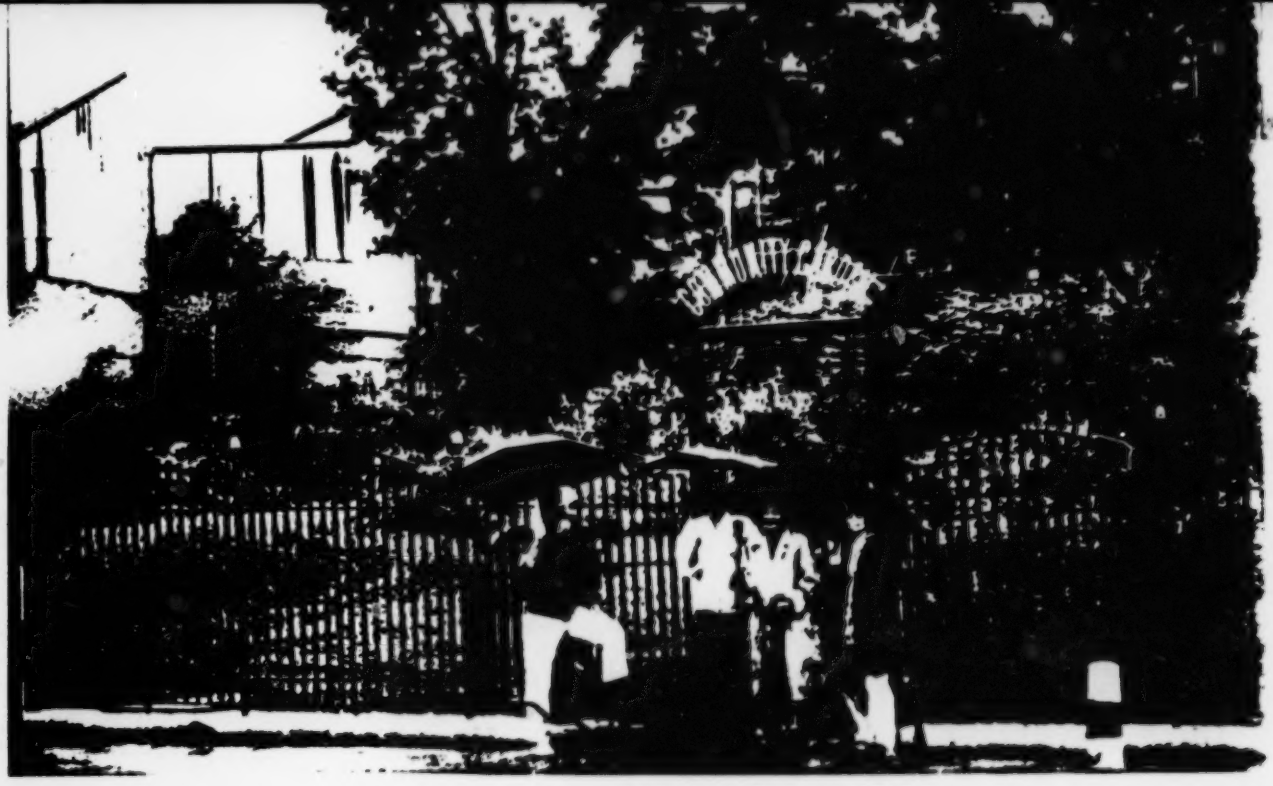
THE DESIGN GAME

The first step in designing the landscape was to decide on scheme which would be acceptable to all those involved. We like to turn the initial stages of the design process into a participatory game - where all interested parties can join in with ideas and have their say.

This can either be via a scaled drawing of the site area, with typical landscape elements and features supplied to the same scale for people to stick onto the plan where they would like them to go. Alternatively, the game can be played on the site itself, walking round it and working out what could go where, such as routes of paths.

It is such an open and flexible method, encouraging participation and helping to remove some of the mystique we sometimes try and preserve about design. It can be used with individuals, sometimes with 'competing' teams and even as an educational game at schools.

Here in Vauxhall, those who wanted to get involved in the game were encouraged to make an informal study of what landscape has to offer;



Completed railings and gates: Summer 1988

Gardeners and the Landscape Architect (second left)

Waterfield Estate - Feltham: London Borough of Hounslow

General view of the existing site

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many visited large gardens to see what ... could be used, such as gazebos, pergolas, etc.

On this project, the Design Game occupied ... and I worked with the locals, not as a professional initiator, bu... d guide, working to encourage them to consider and solve act...

At the end of this particular day, there were enough decisions for ... version of the site to be drawn up - making it large, bright and colourful - for public display. It was decided to keep quite a lot of existing planting, with the addition of a (practice designed) self-build summer home. The keen gardeners didn't want the grant from Lambeth to be mis-used and spoil their garden, so it was decided to spend it on worthwhile and expensive peripherals - boundary railings and gate, a shed, walls, etc -to the tune of about £36,000 (including play equipment).

The process involved quite a learning curve, for me the advising professional, and for the local residents. At first I experienced some "But I am a landscape architect ..." reluctance to accept what I saw as their more 'twiddly' ideas, but eventually came to accept that this was their space and that their ideas had to be incorporated.

HOUNSLOW

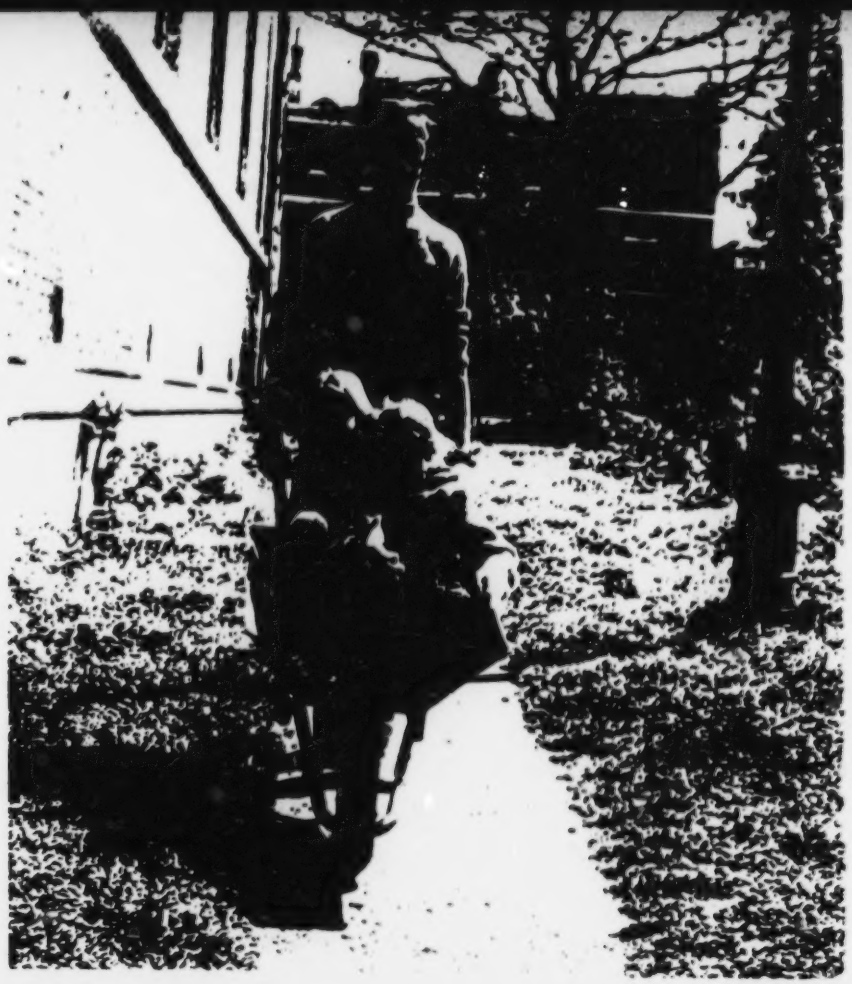
This was something of a panic phone call from a local Tenants Association who told us that the council was proposing to spend £100,000 on their estate. There had been no consultation and the money was going to be spent on things they saw as unwanted and unnecessary.

Our practice was brought in to arbitrate and we prepared a free feasibility study, suggesting such simple, yet vital priorities as security entry-phones; fences (front and back gardens); safety surfaces (play areas); standard fencing, used with a choice of gates; and garden sheds.

Despite this, and the very audible misgivings of the residents, the Council ignored everybody and went ahead anyway, effectively wasting a lot of money.

Eventually, we managed to get the two sides together and some compromises were made. We looked at how other projects had managed to improve similar spaces, using slides and encouraging site visits.

Caravan Exhibition - This was an idea to encourage the residents to tell us what they wanted and comment upon our suggestions. The Tenants Association were sceptical, said it wouldn't work and that people wouldn't



Tenants and children

Tenants visiting the caravan to choose gates and fences

CLAWS hired the caravan and held the exhibition on the estate in February 1989. A 100 per cent turn-out from ground-floor tenants.

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bother to visit the caravan and that some [illegible] be downright rude - they weren't rude and we had a 100% turn-out [illegible] floor flats and homes.

There were several lessons to be learn[illegible] First, the remote throwing of money at a problem of this type - [illegible]ssing the needs of those at whom the cash is, theoretically, being [illegible] not necessarily solve the real problems, or please the residents.

* * *

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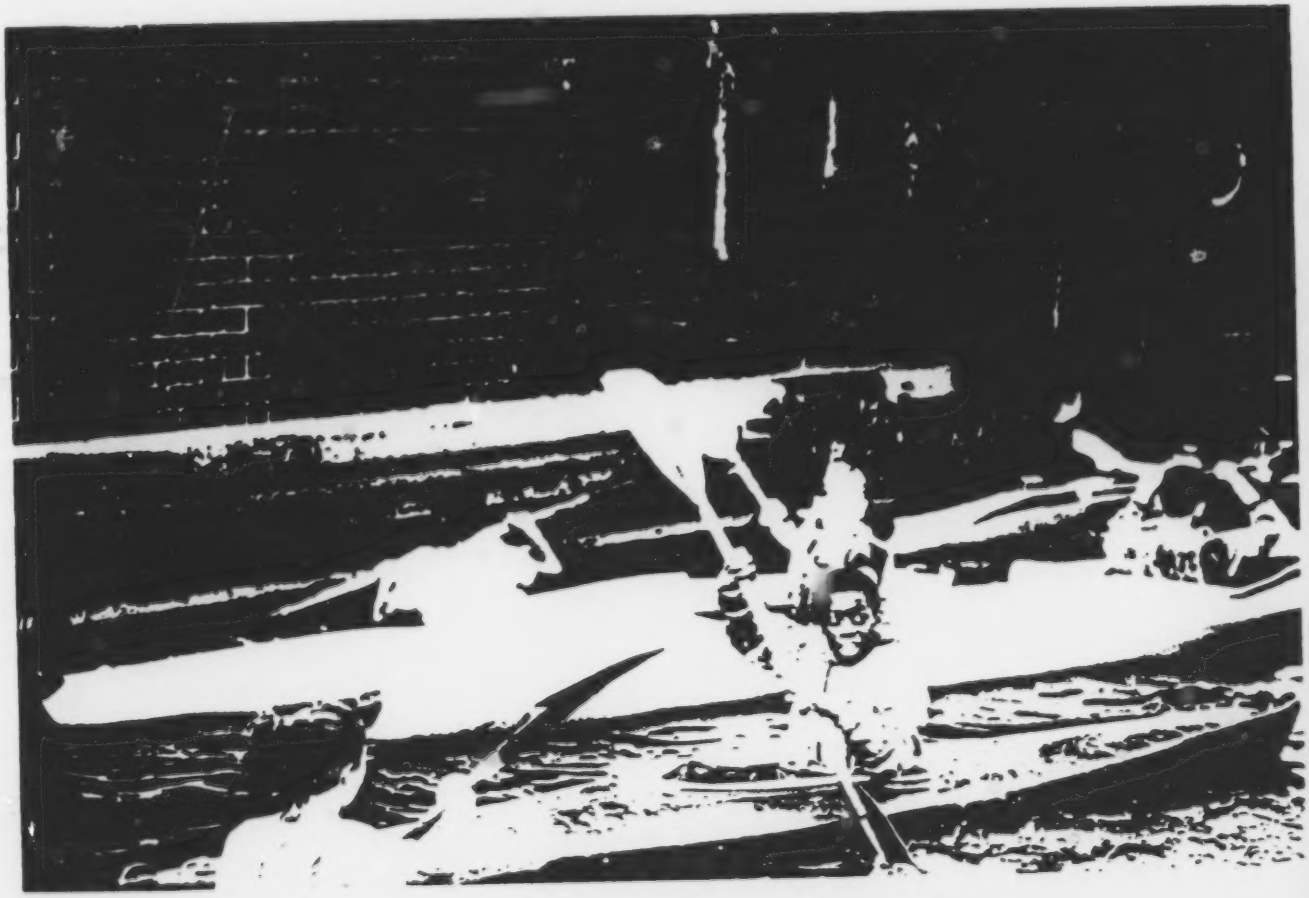
Camley Street Natural Park: Kings Cross

A 2.4 acre green space, threatened by proposals



Ackers activity centre, Birmingham: canoeing on the canal basin

Given the chance, people really do care for the environment

A resident of an Islington Council estate with her front garden

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Irene Lucas, teacher at the park, introduces London's children to wildlife right on their own doorstep (Photo: London Wildlife Trust)

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CHILDREN DESIGN AND BUILD FOR [illegible]

H Meyer-Buck - West Berlin. Arc[illegible] - responsible for school buildings.

FREIZEIT - translated, means Leisure Time

A great deal of money is spent on 'leisure', but while the so-called [illegible] industry' reaps the profits, it seems to pressure society in a misguided vision of leisure activity. As far as children are concerned, many see 'leisure' as watching videos and television, or playing computer games. Many children seem to have lost the ability to play with others, to make social contacts and develop their own imaginations through outdoor, spontaneous games.

If we take a look at school design in Germany, contrasting one built at the turn of the century with a 1970s school building, we can see that the associated landscapes - what should be a natural play space - vary enormously.

* Turn of the Century School - which has hardly changed since it first opened to the public. A sheltered courtyard, a versatile mix of hard and soft landscape encourages play and informal sports, such as football.

* A 1970s School - very little thought was given to landscaping, just a blank, boring expanse of flat, hard landscape. The good ideas of the 1920s and 1950s might have formed the basis for a tradition, but they seemed to have got lost along the way .

The architectural talk then was of 'Function'; this may be adequate for some building types, but in schools this approach did not encourage the development of social behaviour - this was a forgotten function.

'It looks like an empty stage for an actor"

We should revive the old qualities of space and landscape and bring people back together.

In Berlin we have developed a programme of involving children in the revitalisation of their own play spaces and leisure landscapes. This includes recent school-leavers, those without a job who did not get a college or university place. It is a programme under the very general

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A traditional hard courtyard in a Berlin school, with trees and interesting floorscape

A bleak play area outside a modern school in Berlin, which calls for a

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heading of 'Arbeiten und Lernen' - or, [illegible] While you Work'. An important feature of the programme is that [illegible] possible, we try to involve them in projects close to home, [illegible] them to work where they actually live as it strengthens the [illegible] their own community.

We involve them in the design as much as in the implementation; on one project they submitted 250 designs for 1500 sq m space! Several 'judging' sessions were needed to pick the best solutions, a suitable mix of traditional solutions and those which catered for newer needs.

- Kids build their own meeting place in an informal kick-about area. Although it is open to the public - there has been remarkably little vandalism - most would-be 'vandals' were involved in its creation!

- Arbeiten and Lernen - kids built a small pavilion (with discreet adult supervision). It contains simple sports equipment, eg table tennis.

Using softer landscape is better than tarmac - the aim is to create smaller, more familiar, areas. In one area they designed and planted a shrub maze; early fears from the teachers that children would use it as a hiding place to escape lessons were unfounded.

- Play areas - in Germany, the school caretaker is often reactionary and authoritarian - many prefer tarmac to grass as it does not need mowing! But we have local children and their parents volunteering to do the job themselves.

- Models - kids worked on the design of a sports/play area for a narrow, enclosed space. They learnt to interfere as little as possible with established nature. There should be no contradiction between high-density living and the greening of sites.

Part of the learning process for the children was a 'wandering day' - visiting sites which had already been changed. Children tend not to know, even locally, examples of what can be, and has been, done.

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A landscaped play area in Berlin gives a good opportunity for sliding and playing, but there may be other dangers, like mugging.

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A landscaped play area in a school in Berlin offering possibilities as am outdoor theatre.

Students in Berlin, carrying out a Street Landscape Project.

In all these projects, it is important to get a consensus between the local authorities, schools and the children themselves - kids actually told the architects what they wanted - eg, riding bikes on roads.

The success of these projects all depends on the "quality of warmth in your soul". That is the new quality of 'des Willens'.

It is early days for these projects; we're all beginners and want to work together to create a better environment for children to develop their social skills through play.

* * *

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DESIGN AND THE COMMUNITY: THE OPEN AIR CLASSROOM

Martin Madders and Chris Royffe:

Martin Madders is a Senior Lecturer in Ecology and Landscape Design at Leeds Polytechnic, and Chris Royffe is Director of Landscape Architectural Studies at Leeds Polytechnic and a partner in Landscape Design Associates.

Work by Leeds Polytechnic, particularly in the area of housing and recreational landscape, has highlighted the low quality of much of our urban environment and the failure of the 'normal' processes and organisations to bring about significant and lasting improvements. Staff association with the Byker Housing development in Newcastle pointed towards alternative ways of working which could earn the respect of the community, by involving local people in the design process.

Over the last ten years these theories have been put to the test through the unique Design and Community Programme in Leeds.

Involving both design and implementation this project gives Landscape Architecture students the opportunity to explore, in response to contemporary pressures, alternative ways of improving landscape through the encouragement of community action and responsibility.

In addition to this programme, staff have continued to undertake professional design commissions for community-based landscape projects. Much of the work has included design for school grounds, parks and play areas, usually involving the need for low-cost solutions.

This paper focuses on the potential for revitalising school grounds, which may be seen as a community resource and often serve as local parks, play areas and gardens.

THE PROBLEM

Most school grounds are in desperate need of improvement. In many instances the only difference between the Victorian school yard and modern school sites is that grass has replaced stone. Even where significant improvements have been made in the overall landscape, such as in the New Towns, school sites often remain as prominent 'green deserts'. It is sad that where new school buildings provide a rich and exciting environment, for example Burnham Copse Infant School, the design of school landscapes appears to be considered as if it where a decorative and trivial luxury. This is even more surprising when the

current vogue for sport and interest in the environment is considered, and the potential role of school grounds as a teaching resource is examined.

Many of these problems seem to stem from emphasis on quantifiable standards rather than on quality of environment. Government Legislation in 1981 compounded this emphasis by stating that each child must have 9 m2 of space to play in, of which two thirds is to be all-weather surface. The resulting sterile sites reflect more the legal obligations of a Local Authority to contain children within territorial limits during the hours of 9 am to 4 pm, than the provision of a stimulating environment for learning.

Recognition of these problems is not new and in some instances a poor environment has had the positive effect of stimulating improvements by teachers or designers, as for example in the Washington School Yard Project. This was one of the first cases of parents, teachers and children working together to change a patch of concrete into soft landscape.

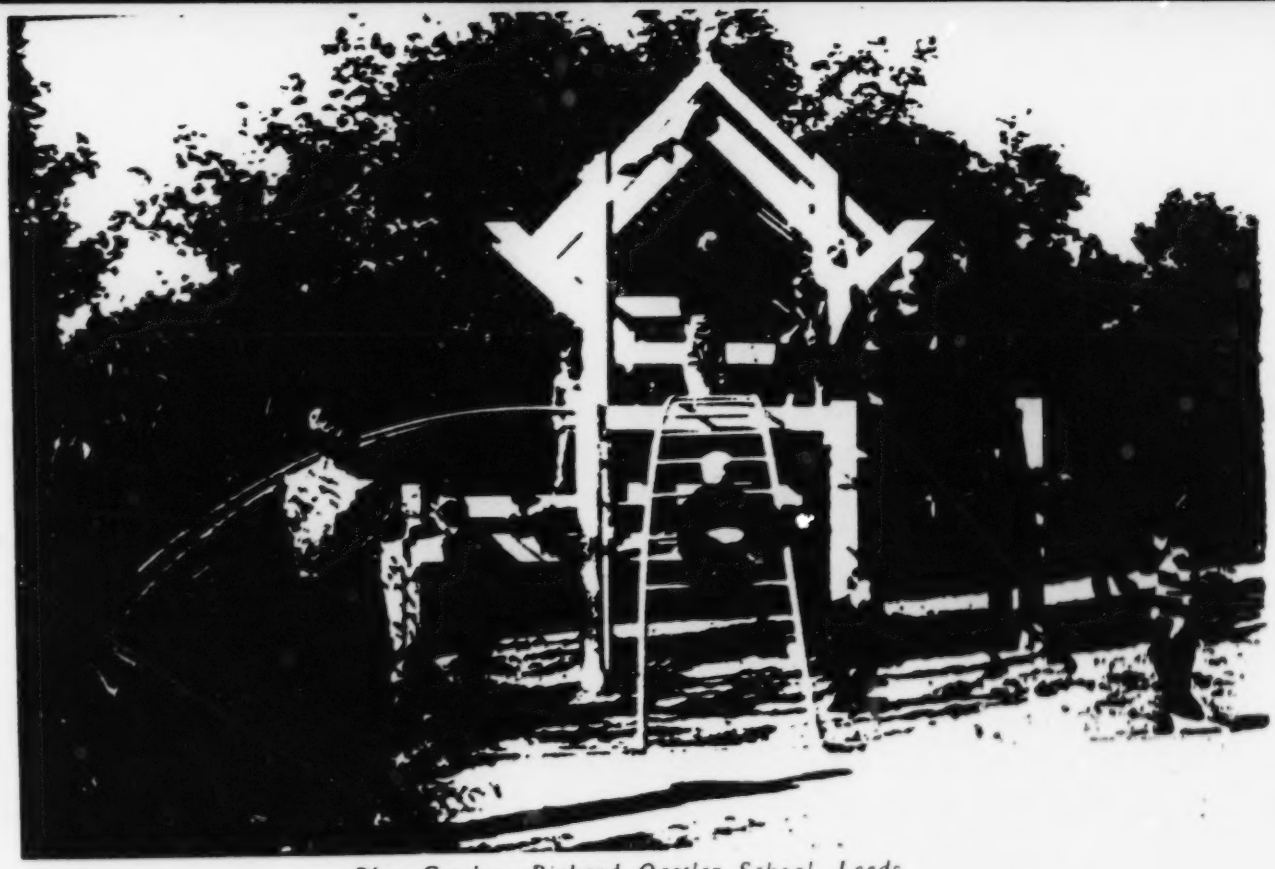
'Community involvement' has become one of the fashionable phrases of the late 1980s. Underlying its use - and over-use - is a clearly discernible movement towards greater involvement of user and public in the design of certain types of landscape, such as housing and schools. That people have a right to contribute to and influence the design of their living environment is now beyond doubt. But how is this best be achieved? How can the landscape architect best assist?

COMMUNITY DESIGN EXPERIENCE

This includes seeking appropriate approvals, funding of projects and assisting with the construction and development of the schemes. None of these activities is exceptional to the 'normal' landscape design process; but they often involve different priorities and emphases, and for this reason the term Community Landscape Architect is used in this context.

Experience has shown that this person has to act as a catalyst in bringing about change, but should not abdicate their role as a designer.

Initially, it is inevitable that much of the time of the community landscape architect will be spent dealing with local and even personal problems. The role of designers as 'environmental trouble-shooter' must not be underestimated; it can be invaluable as a confidence-builder within a community. At Brudenell School, the school and local community had doubts about the team's ability to carry out



Play Garden: Richard Oastler School, Leeds

Designed and implemented by Leeds Polytechnic students

Planets Garden: Castleton School, Leeds

Designed and implemented by Leeds Polytechnic students

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environmental improvements in their school yard, which flooded every time it rained, in site of local pressure to have the drains cleaned. By dealing with the problem immediately, the project group were able to establish considerable goodwill for the subsequent project.

Within the community, the landscape architect must also be active in the whole area of environmental education. This can include providing schools with general advice and ideas, as well as designing schemes in close consultation with the school community. Experience has shown that the expectation of most community groups is not high, but as A. Young warned (Landscape Design, 1987), "great dissatisfaction can be created within the community if the participation process engenders interest, hope and co-operation and it all ends with the proposals being shelved or even delayed."

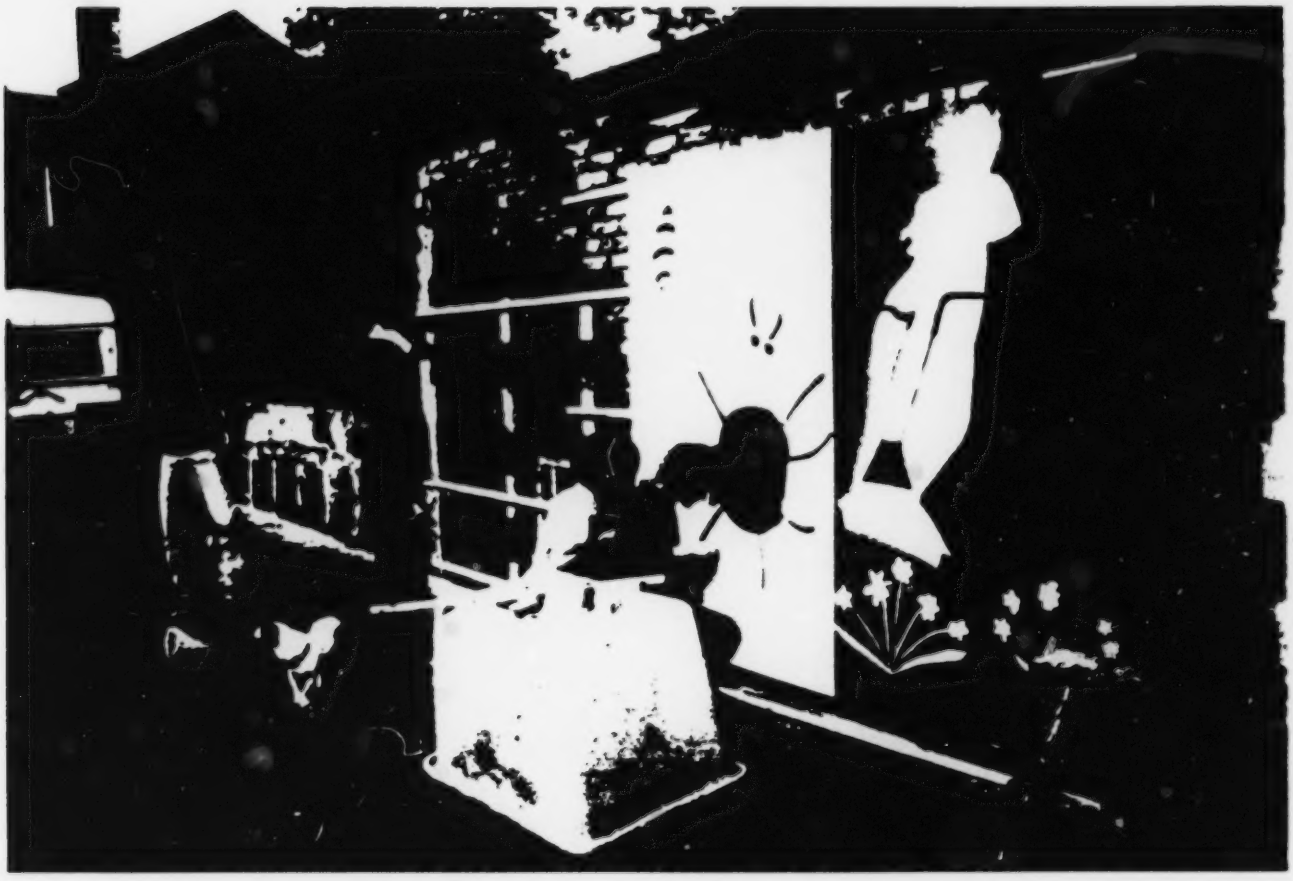
The message is clear; the landscape architect must be aware of what can be achieved and counsel the group accordingly.

To judge from the product of many community projects, the design standard tends to be low. The likely reason in many cases is a minimal involvement of professional designers. Another often quoted reason is the low skill levels of the community carrying out the work, but although this may be a constraint, it cannot be an excuse for poor design. Neither can a low budget be put forward as an explanation. Good design is not necessarily expensive!

Good design is however dependant on a coherent overall plan, a plan which recognises the context and uniqueness of the sites, and the needs of the users. It may well be adapted over time, particularly as such projects often develop in phases, but it will provide a basis for future change and outline an underlying philosophy for site improvements.

The designer must take particular care to gear presentations to an audience not adept at reading plans. Models, supported by slides and carefully prepared verbal presentations, usually stimulate the most response. Even at the construction stage, accurate large-scale models are of great value to self-help/self-build groups with limited skill levels.

It is usually not sufficient to rely on large public meetings as a means of communication. Such meetings are often poorly attended and rarely representative. At both Castleton and St. Luke's schools in Leeds, Polytechnic students have tried to become involved in the everyday activities of the school. They have initiated and helped to run classroom projects and field students, taken school assemblies, prepared exhibitions



Improving the playground: Brudenell Road School, Leeds
Designed and implemented by school children and Leeds Polytechnic students

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for the children and parents and run field visits, all aimed at improving understanding and acceptance of the schemes being proposed and implemented. Perhaps the most successful events have been visits to existing schemes, allowing groups to experience comparable design at first hand.

Community projects are subject to all normal planning and building regulations, and it will be the job of the landscape architect to steer a project through all the necessary paperwork. However, 'approvals' may also be of a more tactical and informal manner. On the school sites, as much energy has often been invested in obtaining the approval and goodwill of the caretaker as that of the planners.

Beyond the management of a project, the community landscape architect will usually be involved in fund-raising. The Polytechnic community programme has attracted funds of over £120,000 in ten years from a diverse range of sources, including Councils, charities and voluntary bodies. It has been involved in the organisation and running of community-based activities which, although yielding relatively small sums of money, can foster wider community participation.

Where members of the community are to participate in the construction of schemes, it is vital that the design takes account of the skills available. Although these skills tend to be of a low order, some individuals may come forward with specialised skills which can be exploited to good advantage, if identified early enough. It is important that the landscape architect is capable of undertaking close supervision of site activities. Site cover will often be necessary outside normal working hours, such as weekends or evenings, as this is the time when much community labour can be mobilised.

Project phasing, particularly for self-help/self-build groups, should allow for construction in easy, self contained stages. This provides for design changes and modifications to respond to local needs as the project develops, but also encourages groups to see the result of their labours as early in a scheme as possible. At Castleton the project has progressed in a series of phases over nearly five years. The initial play feature and planting signalled to the community what could be achieved, doubling the commitment of the school and paving the way for subsequent phases. The later development of a 'planets' teaching garden benefited in that the pressure for play on the site was concentrated away from this more vulnerable area. The use of the site could be monitored so that a later

phase, the location of a pond, was eventually taken into an internal courtyard where it could be more easily controlled.

THE OPEN AIR CLASSROOM

To get maximum benefit from such areas, landscape design should not only provide a rich and varied experience but should also be related to the teaching curriculum of each school. Occasionally some part of the syllabus, or piece of teaching equipment has inspired a design theme, such as astronomy which gave rise to the 'planets' garden at Castleton, or the adventure play-structure resembling the coloured rods of the 'Cuisenaire' number teaching system at Ingram Road First School.

The last decade has been marked by profound changes in what is taught and the teaching methods used. In many subjects areas, an 'heuristic' approach to learning is favoured in which pupils, especially between the ages of 8-13 years, follow open-ended problems at their own pace. For example, rather than be told by the teacher which of the mortar-mixes being used on site was the strongest, pupils at one first school devised and carried out simple strength-tests on various mixes to find out the answer for themselves. This system of teaching seems to prolong the phase of intense curiosity about their surroundings, a characteristic of young children which can be quickly deadened by more formal and traditional teaching methods.

Our new feature of the modern system seems to be that a lesson can be quickly adapted to take advantage of interesting events in the school grounds. For example, when a soil-profile was excavated as a JCB cut into a bank, it briefly became the focus for 'environmental science', and the design was altered so that some of the profile was left exposed for future teaching use.

In first schools with appropriately designed grounds, staff as a group may often plan their teaching curriculum a term in advance, usually based on a theme, like 'Autumn' or 'The School Wildlife Garden'. Staff develop and share teaching ideas expressed in association diagrams of the teaching opportunities that the theme might provide for their own special subject area. In general there seems to be greatest willingness to consider cooperating in the design of school landscapes as a teaching resource among first and middle schools, since the exam-based curricula for senior pupils remain more formal, didactic and firmly class-room based. It is unfortunate that, although the Government's new national

teaching curriculum has an important environmental component, this is seen only as part of the science section.

Nevertheless, many opportunities do exist at the Secondary School level, and at Neale Wade School in Cambridgeshire, teachers responded positively to a landscape plan including designs for an outdoor theatre, sculpture garden and nature study area.

Group interaction between children and a varied and diverse environment gives enhanced opportunities for the practice and development of 3-dimensional motor skills, and verbal skills. In order to provide maximum opportunity for teaching use, a school landscape should provide a rich and diverse environment, integrated with the outside world, yet which provides areas sheltered from weather and vehicle noise. The design should be robust enough to permit a wide range of active and passive pursuits, and while it should be structured to provide firm points of reference, it should be open-ended in the sense that allowances should be made for changes in use and development through client-involvement. Above all, the design should provide an enduring, unique quality reflecting the school and local community and the surrounding landscape.

The relationship between the taught curriculum and the abilities of the average child is still strongly influenced by theories of mental development, established during a lifetime of study by the psychologist Professor Jean Piaget. These state that between the ages 5-18 most children progress through distinctive and recognisable stages in cognitive development.

PIAGETIAN STAGE

1) Transition from intuitive thought to early "concrete operations"

This stage can be translated into the following types of activity:-

Planting of species and annual seeds by groups of pupils as part of the design.

Collection of material from the project area including parts of plants, animals and intercepted windblown litter.

Classification of material.

Seasonal themes.

Group displays and pictures.

Paintings of mini-beasts, monsters and plants.

2) Later "concrete operations"

Pupils' activities:-

Long-term studies of plant heights, life-cycles, and relationships to temperature and rainfall measurements.

Estimates of quantity and of area. Graphs and histograms of information.

Maps and plans of vegetation and play structures.

Creative writing using school grounds as stimulus and theme.

A study of school ground planting followed by organised field visits to the natural communities that it represents, e.g oak woodland.

3) Formal operations and abstract thought

Pupils' activities:-

Numerical sampling and statistical treatment of data.

Study of the physical qualities of materials used in design.

Budgeting of construction costs.

Maintenance as vocational training.

Testing of camouflage models. Farm crops, grain, oil seeds. Carbon cycle, cyclic exchange of ecological resources.

These Piagetian stages, which are only an approximate set of guidelines to the mental development of an average child, more or less coincide with the First/Middle/High school ages in Leeds schools. Piaget's work is helpful in an understanding of educational opportunities for the teaching use of school grounds.

These examples illustrate that as well as providing an attractive and stimulating environment school sites should be designed as a teaching resource.

DESIGN OBSERVATIONS

With experience over the years, certain observations have been made which may be helpful in design within school environments.

For example, any construction work in school grounds is inevitably interpreted by children as a play feature which is fine unless it is unsafe, or not sufficiently robust to survive this kind of use. Construction is the best phase, so that the more fragile aspects of the design - such as planting - take place in one area, while at the same time, more attractive opportunities for play are provided elsewhere.

In many cases pre-fabrication of structures - such as play equipment, planters and mural panels - has been possible in Leeds using the Polytechnic Landscape Resources Centre at Beckett Park, which has also been used for trials in new planting techniques, and houses a demonstration wildlife area for teaching use by visiting school groups.

The construction of 'play fences' has proved useful and these function both as a territorial markers and visual attractive play features which divert attention from the planting until it becomes established.

The design and construction of items widespread throughout the school grounds are more likely to survive than concentrated zones that focus the full attention of children on one site as a novel and isolated opportunity for play.

The use of a range of woody perennials has been developed mostly those which coppice readily, in 'play gardens' where, far from being excluded, children are actually encouraged by the design to play among plants and to create their own paths and tunnels.

An attractive and functional school landscape need to be considered as a financial sink though, for example the careful design of attractive shelterbelt planting might cut heating costs of a school by 10 per cent by reducing wind speeds around school buildings.

Maintenance is always a problem in relation to the design of school grounds, yet good design should give opportunity for the school to gain important teaching material through carrying out a significant proportion of the maintenance themselves, for example in the repair of play equipment, and the care of plant materials.

Schools which teach workshop subjects are more likely to take an active interest in the maintenance of structures - such as planters or adventure play equipment - if the components are simple and standardised and the school is provided with the timber and plans, so that repairs can be carried out as part of normal teaching. Such involvement is never a substitute for general ground maintenance and a clear distinction of responsibilities is fundamental to an enduring landscape.

Today's children are familiar with, and expect sophisticated presentation of information - as on TV - and it is hard for the teachers to compete in capturing their attention by preparing classroom teaching material on a limited budget. Through first-hand experience by pupils in school grounds design, construction and maintenance, learning opportunities and a source of interest and enjoyment are provided at low

cost. First and middle school pupils who joined the design and construction phases of wildlife gardens remember the location of the individual shrubs and trees they planted and continue to write about this experience years later at high school.

However, without the active involvement of teachers success is likely to be minimal. At Burnham Copse School, teachers complained that they had not been helped to make best use of the new school buildings; and the same applies to the development of the new school landscapes. Brian Benson, Head Teacher at Richard Oastler School, remarked that after five years of benefiting from a richly designed landscape, teachers still need advice on design of school landscape, from basic and in-service teacher-training courses, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses, teaching packages, design-guides and landscape-management notes. The role of the landscape architect should be to encourage these activities.

Professional designers can educate and assist 'barefoot' landscape architects - teachers, community workers and the like - to design landscapes of real lasting quality. Experience has shown that design guides doe not go far enough, but local education initiatives, radio and television are all possibilities.

The potential of the theme of Design as a curriculum focus in schools is not at present appreciated. Participation in design in schools and the creation of a well-designed environment may raise the baseline of expectations of the quality of surroundings at a time when education for leisure is likely to be more significant as schools reflect increasing difficulties experienced by pupils in finding employment. Design as a core to the curriculum in schools would provide opportunities for consideration of aesthetic qualities normally excluded by a system which uses a mechanistic and starkly functional approach to the education of children.

Perhaps by creative participation in improvements to school landscapes, and changes in the curriculum, a national and active concern and participation in the improvement of the quality of our environment may be born.

* * *

GOOD PRACTICE IN INNER CITY LEISURE PROVISION

SUE GLYPTIS, LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

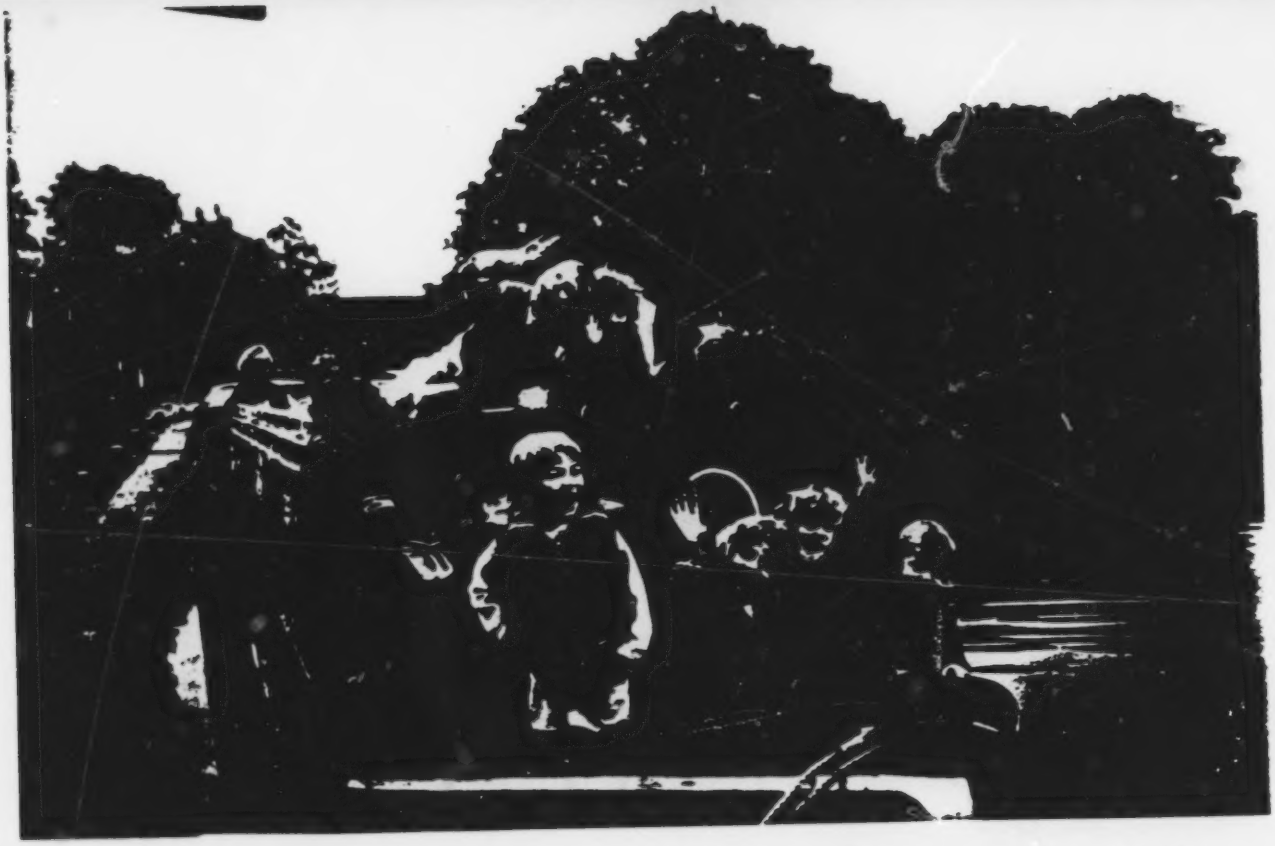
This paper is drawn mainly from a study funded and recently published by the Inner Cities Directorate of the Department of the Environment. The study is one of a series concerned with good practice in urban regeneration. Its focus was, therefore, not merely on sport and leisure provision for its own sake, but on ways in which such a provision could play a part in revitalising the physical, social and economic fabric of urban areas.

The study was based largely on 14 case study projects, but also draws lessons from many more, throughout the UK, some with parallels in the rest of Europe. At first sight, sports and leisure might be seen to be unlikely contributors to the process of regeneration.

However, sport and leisure facilities contribute to urban regeneration in many ways. These include:-

- upgrading and re-using derelict land and buildings
- converting premises from redundant previous uses
- visual and environmental improvements
- contributing to the quality of life of urban residents, including under-privileged groups, by providing local opportunities for enjoyment and well-being
- generating local employment and revenue
- generating community spirit and community pride
- developing tourism potential

All of the case studies contributed to urban regeneration in at least one of these ways. In 1986-1987 government support for sport and leisure provision through the Urban Programme amounted to some £33.7 million and contributed to as many as 1200 separate schemes. In addition, many more schemes are funded by the Sports Council, by local authorities and



Leicester kids afloat: inner city youngsters exploring the countryside by narrow-boat.

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Wheels adventure park, Birmingham: roller skating rink.

by the voluntary and commercial sectors. The 14 projects examined in detail were selected with reference to existing evaluative reports, and in discussion with DOE and Sports Councils Officers.

No claim is made that they are the best or only examples of their type. They were chosen rather to provide a range of examples of varying scale, which other people confronted with similar opportunities or challenges, might find useful in developing their own provisions.

This paper focuses on a few of the projects, which illustrate the kinds of provision that can be achieved, and the resources unleashed, in often the most unpromising of circumstances.

THE ACKERS TRUST, SMALL HEATH, BIRMINGHAM

The Ackers Trust is a registered charity, formed in 1981, to develop and manage a 60 acre derelict factory site alongside the Grand Union Canal in Small Heath, Birmingham, for the benefit of the community. Small Heath is one of the most deprived wards in England.

The site now contains facilities for a wide range of outdoor activities, including a high quality floodlit ski slope, a floodlit multi-dimensional 30' climbing wall, a fleet of canoes, four narrow boats, mountain bikes, an orienteering trail, trim track, playing fields, bar, meetings room and activities room. Part of the site has been left uncultivated and densely vegetated to provide a nature area for local school groups.

The facilities are well used by inner city schools, local youth organisations and individuals. In addition to the physical reclamation of the site itself, the scheme highlights several other aspects of good practice:-

- Its initiation can be attributed specially to the vision, energy and influence of one key individual - a local councillor and former Lord Mayor of Birmingham who saw the huge potential of the site as a local community resource. As a councillor he had contacts in key statutory agencies, and could bring them together and gain their support.

- Funds have been obtained from a wide range of sources - the former West Midlands County Council, Birmingham City Council, the Urban Programme, the sports Council and many other

The Ackers activity centre, Birmingham: adventure climbing in the inner city

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organisations, including voluntary sources such as the Welconstruct Trust and the BBC Children in Need appeal.

- The Trust have used natural features of the site in developing the range of activities, and have shown great imagination and foresight in doing so. When the site was being cleared, for example, a small hill was built up with surplus earth, because its potential as a ski slope was recognised. It was several years before the ski slope could actually be built; but the vision, and the planning, and the resourcefulness were there from the start.

- The facilities are made available as much as possible - 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, except for Christmas day.

- The scheme employs staff from the local community.

- It has an energetic and charismatic manager.

- It is committed to serving special target groups. Unemployed people, local schools and inner city youth groups are charged concessionary prices. The site is used by half the schools in Birmingham - this brings in income, and also introduces new generations of users to the facilities available. There is a weekly OAP club and activity sessions for the unemployed.

- The Trust operates on the "Robin Hood Principle", using admission fees from the rich to subsidise the poor. In the evenings, the centres charges the going commercial rate for skiing, and the income generated is used to employ more staff and to subsidise activities for the local community.

THE OASIS KARTING PROJECT; LAMBETH, LONDON

The Oasis Karting Project is one of the activities provided by the Oasis Children's Venture, a charitable organisation in Lambeth which runs a variety of projects.

These include camping and hostelling trips for young people, a community park, a children's nature garden, festivals, and a summer

Oasis karting project, Lambeth, London: the kart track

inflatables project. Indeed, the Karting Project was not actually planned, but came about because an adventure playground was given some karts, and decided to find ways of using them. It was able to do so by converting a disused school playground, constructing a kart track from old tyres, and building a workshop.

The Karting Project offers opportunities both to take part in karting, and to learn the mechanical skills of kart maintenance. It is very well used, and it costs little to run. It runs a flourishing kart club for local children and caters for children's and young people's groups, disabled, young offenders, and women.

Liverpool Watersports Centre.

Liverpool Watersports Centre is a registered charity, and one of the several projects managed and sponsored by the Merseyside Council for Voluntary Service, who have adopted the objective of turning liabilities into assets.

It makes use of readily available water space to provide a range of water sports and canal based activities are very low cost, for all sectors of the community, but concentrating on particular target groups, notably women and the disabled.

It began originally on a very unprepossessing stretch of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, and now uses both the Canal and the restored Liverpool Docks. The centre also works in partnership with other agencies - for example, it was given space in the docks by the Merseyside Development Corporation in return for managing the use of that water space.

A disused pumping station acts as the base for the scheme. Tuition is offered in sailing, windsurfing, rowing and canoeing. There is also a narrow boat available for hire and for canal history trips. To encourage participation, the scheme undertakes an annual travelling roadshow, when schools and other groups are invited to take part free of charge.

Interested users are encouraged to become volunteer workers on the scheme - working alongside the paid staff and receiving the same training; this can help them subsequently to get jobs on the scheme or in similar work elsewhere.

The scheme has been funded by a variety of agencies, mostly in the public sector, and has been quick to respond to any sudden availability of funds. In line with many other projects, the Liverpool Watersport Centre has found in relatively easy to attract money for setting up new activities,

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but much more difficult to raise funds for the consolidation of exiting ones: innovation attracts funding much more readily than does proven success.

CENTRE AT7; COVENTRY

Centre AT7 is an inner city sports centre in one of the most deprived districts in Coventry, managed by a charitable trust, the Coventry and Warwickshire Awards Trust.

The centre contains a large sports hall, an indoor athletics training facility including a six lane sprint track and sunken sand pit, a practice hall, a weight room and a bar.

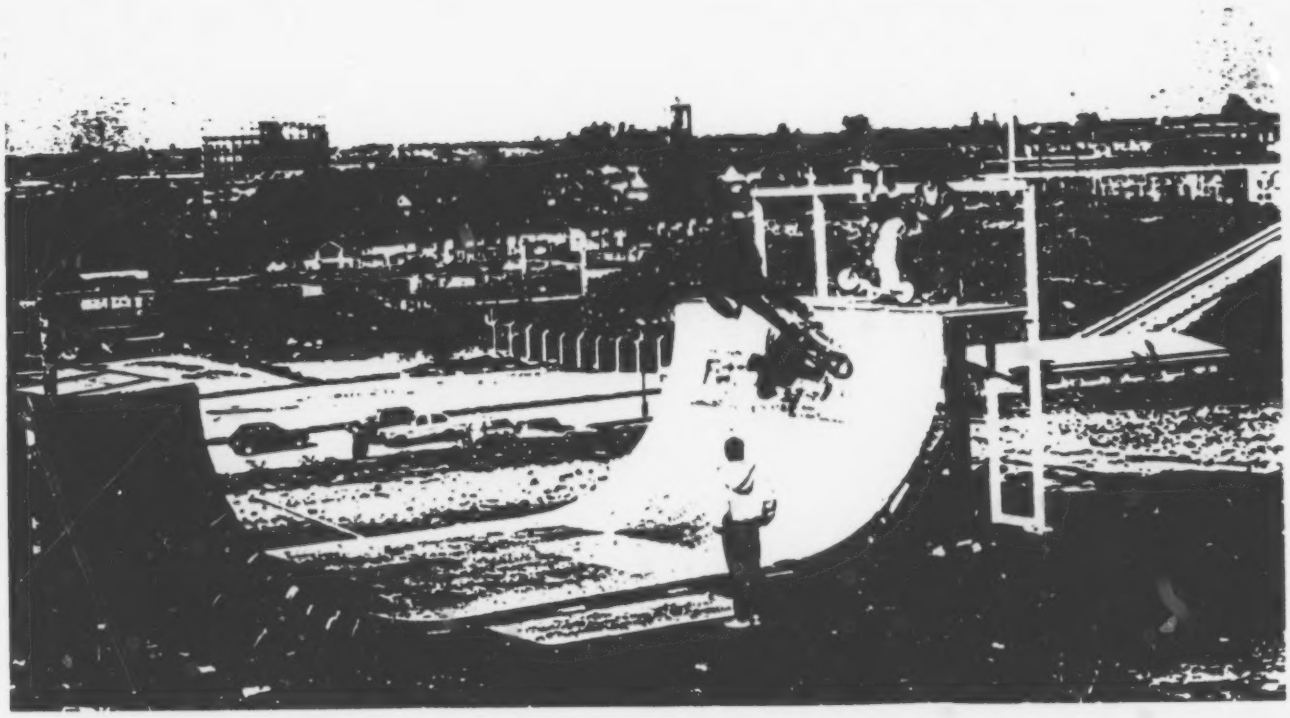
It has been built on the car park of the former Austin Morris Sports and Social Club, and was funded by a large Urban Programme grant over £900,000. Its scale might make it difficult to replicate, but it involves many aspects of good practice which are worthy of much wider adoption in smaller schemes too.

It provides a balanced range of activities; encourages particular target groups to take part, especially young people; it targets the local community by offering a Community Card and low prices to residents of the 7 neighbouring Wards.

Prior to the opening, the staff spent a lot of time meeting local people and gaining their opinions on how the centre should be used. The Centre offered free use in the opening week, to encourage people to come along and offers a centre of excellence for athletics which reflects the involvement of David Moorcroft. A Director of Trust, and a well-known athlete, he can act as its figurehead and help enormously in making contact and gaining support.

Centre AT7 attracts private sponsorship, for example from Nike, and from a covenanted donation which provides a regular income. The Trust has also prepared a list of sponsorship options, listing specific projects to which sponsors can donate, ranging from £75 to £250,000, including details of how sponsor's name could be linked with each option. Overall, the Centre very successfully combines provision for the local community with high class indoor athletics training.

SPORTS MOTIVATION PROJECT; MIDDLESBOROUGH



Wheels adventure park, Birmingham: freestyle area for skateboarding and BMX.

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The Sports Motivation Project in Middlesbrough is a sports leadership scheme which aims to work mainly with the unemployed. It is provided by Middlesbrough Borough Council, who recognised the lack of motivation among unemployed people, and the lack of activities for them.

The project provides a variety of activities, using existing facilities throughout the Borough, mostly free of charge to the users. The scheme has its own minibus to transport users, staff and equipment to the various venues. As well as offering a variety of activities, the scheme offers them in a variety of ways. These include regular sessions for keep fit and pop-mobility; coaching courses in particular sports; leagues for five-a-side football, cricket and bowls; and multi-activity sessions in local community halls.

The Borough Council funds three permanent staff, and other have been funded through the job training schemes. The scheme was developed after careful preparatory work, including questionnaire surveys of local unemployed people, and chatting to people in Job Centres, youth clubs, and probation centres. It is also well publicised, particularly by display boards which are used at shows and in shopping centres.

All of the case studies are successful, but their success has been neither automatic nor straightforward to achieve. All of them, at some stage in their development, have encountered problems, surmounted difficulties, or had to adapt to new circumstances. Providers and facilitators need to recognise and catalyse those factors which make for success. The case studies demonstrate the key factors to success. The include:-

- a wide and imaginative search for sites, and the creativity to see their potential. Resourcefulness and vision are needed to see new uses in unexpected places - such as abseiling from disused bridges and viaducts, and the use of the external wall of a prison as climbing wall.

- being able to respond readily to the sudden availability of resources, wether it be money, sites facilities, or equipment.

- the driving force of committed individuals. It has often been a key individual who has started projects and lent the guiding hand to

ranslate ideas into reality. They are people of vision persuasiveness, energy and commitment. They are often well known and well connected locally. They cannot be planned for, but they can be sought out and supported.

- a real commitment to serving local people, especially disadvantaged groups.

- a real commitment to consultation, not as a mere formality, but to find out exactly what people need. The most successful schemes have worked <u>with</u> people, not <u>for</u> them.

- maximising the quality and visual appearance of facilities. There is no reason why poor people should be given poor quality facilities.

- looking widely at all possible sources of funding; involving well known personalities in fund-raising, and having a list of sponsorship options. Funding is the major problems for most schemes, for several reasons. Firstly, most get their money from a multiplicity of sources; this can make it difficult to be accountable to different objectives. Secondly, the earmarked nature of much funding means that projects tend to develop in a piecemeal fashion, rather than in line with a planned strategy. Thirdly, above all, revenue funding is hard to obtain. Capital projects attract money because they are tangible, and more obviously innovative. However, success and continuity are often crucially dependent on the long term security of specific staff posts.

- the most successful schemes are notable for the quality, enthusiasm and commitment of their staff, often far beyond the call of duty. Ways must be found of encouraging sponsors to fund staff, but it is difficult to do so, because they do not want the long-term commitment and, more cynically, they tend to prefer something more tangible and permanent.

In conclusion, the key resource of all is resourcefulness. In looking at the resources of the inner city, attention must be confined to physical

resources, important though they are. It is human resources that bring projects into being and make them a success.

(*) C.M. Park and S. Glyptis, 1989, '*Developing sport and leisure practice in urban regeneration*' ; London, Department of the Environment.

* * *

RECYCLING FOR PLAY

David Stone

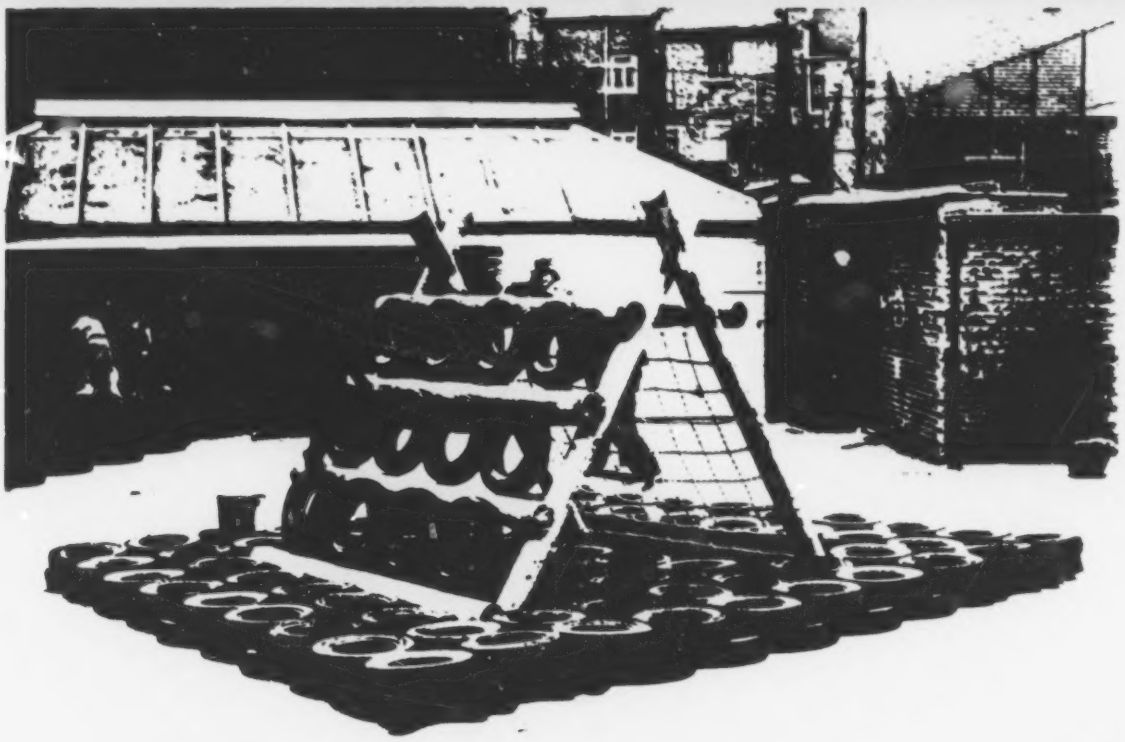
The provision for children's play is an important part of urban development. There is now a general acknowledgement that play is important to children's physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. When at play, children are solely responsible for themselves, their actions and the consequences of those actions. As such, a playground is a unique place where children are in charge of their own learnings, testing their physical capabilities, thinking through problems, learning and negotiating with other children. This accumulation of experience will remain with them for the rest of their lives.

The making of a playground can be a rewarding and memorable experience for children. There is also much to be gained from community involvement in playground construction both in terms of positive focus for community action and in the provision of inexpensive play equipment.

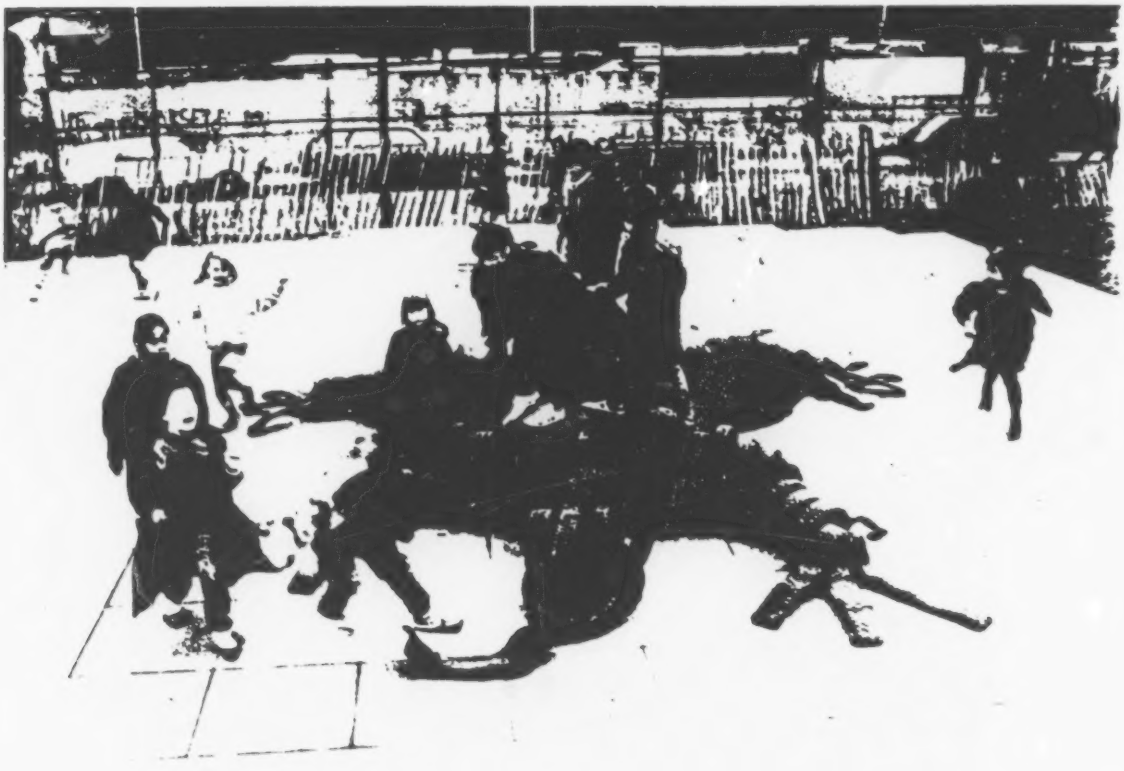
The Islington Schools Environmental Project, has been experimenting with the use of discarded car and lorry tyres in the construction of play equipment. During the past fifteen years, we have created many play environments which have utilised car and lorry tyres in a variety of ways.

The advantages of the use of tyres are that they are free, extremely durable and there is a continuous supply. Used with imagination and care, tyres are a basic material which has a wide range of possibilities in construction.

Our own experience has shown that within playgrounds which are supervised by day and secure by night, tyre structures are cheap and safe. They are particularly popular with children from age 4 to 11. There is a resistance to the use of tyres on playgrounds in this country due to their flammability. By contrast, tyres are used extensively in Canada, America and to some degree in Japan and Holland. However, this is a valid concern and perhaps it would be wise to introduce tyre structures with modesty in any new context and to avoid their use in play environments which are unsupervised or vulnerable. We have found that most school grounds are particularly suited to their use.



*Play Structure, with tyre safety bed - (Primary School, Islington, London).



*Lizard Model Primary School, Islington, London

*Photographs by Mr. B. P. Allen

Safe tyre structures are dependant on proper selection of tyres, thorough cleaning, sound construction and good design. Like all play equipment, they also a require maintenance programme.

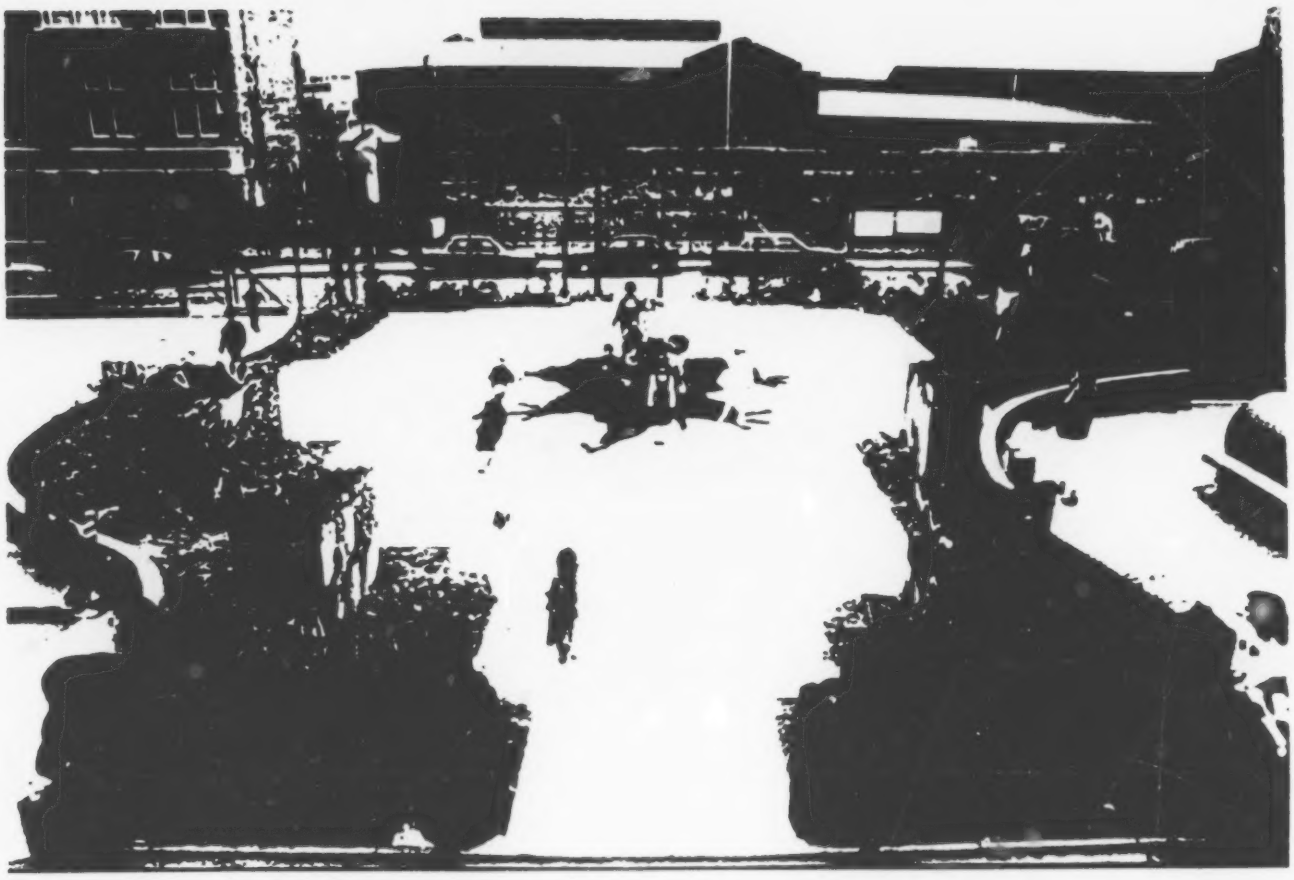
In selection, a knowledge of tyre construction, type and sizes are essential. This can be obtained from car manuals, through experiment, for example by dissecting various tyres and through discussion with the motor trade, particularly the tyre disposal companies. New, but reject tyres are far the most reliable. Unfortunately, the major companies in recent years have chosen to recycle their rejects in alternative ways, as fuel and to produce crumbs.

A concerted lobby may reverse this position on the part of the companies, after all, a small concession on their behalf could provide many valuable playgrounds! The disposal companies are the next best option, as they have vast quantities to select from. Talk to local tyre dealers to find out which company collects their waste. Also, remember many tyres have a second-hand value, so the disposal firms will only pass on those which have no market value. Many used tyres are sold to the Third World for use on vehicles, crossply tyres (nylon rather than steel braced) are hand crafted into robust soles for sandals. Oil rigs use "super single" lorry tyres for platform buffers and tyres have even been used as underwater structures to encourage the growth of coral reefs!

It requires patience to select appropriate tyres. Avoid tyres which have treads worn thin on one side as they will be weak. Use larger, stronger tyres which are usually used on more expensive cars. Use nylon braced crossplys if possible (although these are increasingly difficult to find). Unless you are capable of repairing them, avoid tyres with splits which expose the steel bracing, particularly with lorry tyres, as they have steel in the side wall.

Any tyres will be dirty in delivery. Road grime can be cleaned with proprietary engine cleaner, or large quantities of washing-up liquid. It is essential to check thoroughly the inside and the outside of every tyre for nails or glass. Lorry tyres are particularly prone, due to their use on building sites.

In construction, tyres are inherently robust and are particularly suited to the hard use that children will put them to. As a design unit, the tyre has vast potential. Experiment with model and real tyres before you commit yourself to a final design.



A landscaped play area with 'lizard' tyre structure in the centre

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Tyres may be fixed through their treads, or through the side wall. Tread to tread fixing is very strong due to the reinforcement in this part of the tyre. Side wall fixing can tear, but this may be minimized by the use of large "mudguard" washers, with a small interior hole and an exterior dimension of 1 1/4 inch. All fixings should be either zinc passivated or galvanized to the appropriate British Standard.

In terms of safety it is important that all fixings are hidden and there are no protrusions which may present any hazard to children. Bolt heads usually fix naturally inside the tyres, presenting no danger, however, this is an important point which may not be overlooked.

As mentioned earlier, there are a number of interesting examples of the use of tyres in playgrounds all over the world. An excellent source of inspiration is a book by Paul Hogan entitled *"The Nuts and Bolts of Playground Construction"*, published by Leisure Press, P.O Box 3, West Point, N.Y. 10096.

An idea which we have used extensively which is described in this book is the lorry tyre play cube. It consists of six 1000 mm lorry tyres connected at four points on each tyre to form a cube. Four cubes are then bolted together to stop rocking. Cubes may be suspended and bolted to large diameter posts concreted into the ground. The cubes are quick to make, inexpensive, require little expertise and make enormously popular play objects.

A well-designed playground will offer the children opportunities for change. This requirement of children at play first came to our notice when we realised that children seemed to prefer an out of bounds tyre dump to the fixed equipment in their playground. In fact, they were using the tyres for a whole variety of purposes, which would never have occurred to us. In response, we have converted a number of playground shelters into tyre sheds. This is an area of loose tyres with some riveted into tubs, contained with a low wall constructed, of course, from tyres!

The supply of an impact absorbing safety surface under all equipment is becoming a recommendation of many Authorities and is about to become a Private Member's Bill in Parliament.

All tyre structures should have a safety surface around them. The type of surface will depend on the nature of the site, provision for maintenance and the height of the structure. I highly recommend that you seek advice from your local Authority on guidelines and product choice on this matter. In schools, the Physical Education advisory

*Truck Tyre Cube - (Penton Primary School, Islington, London)

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*Children playing on loose tyres - (Primary School Islington, London)

teachers ought to be able to help or the landscape architects departments and parks departments in local councils usually are able to advise; the National Playing Fields Association can also help.

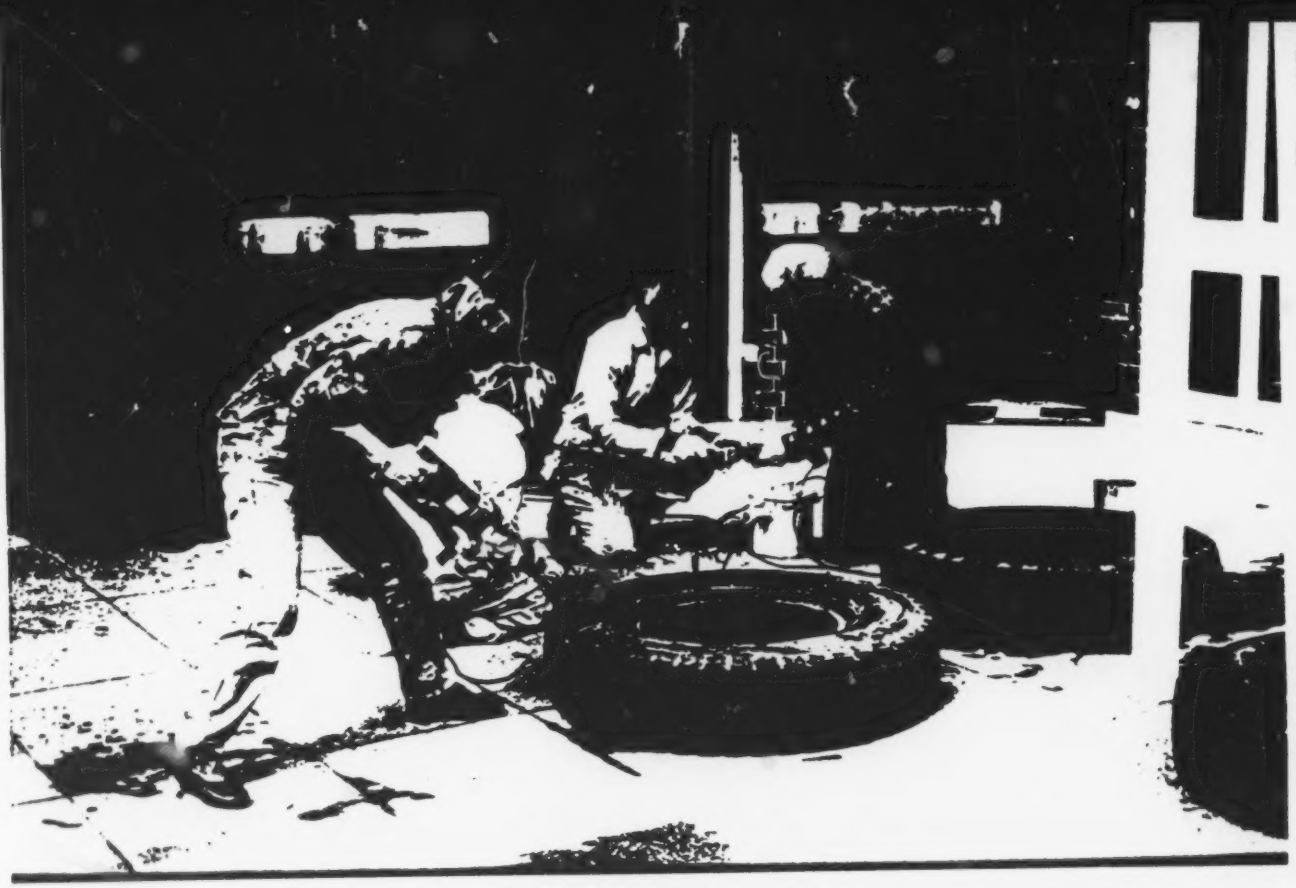
If reject new tyres can be obtained, it is possible to construct safety surfacing from tyres. The tyres are laid in rows two deep and overlapped to avoid any gaps where a child could fall through to the ground. These beds have a high degree of absorbancy; when tested by the Greater London Council scientific department, it was found that a single layer had a critical fall height (this is the height beyond which a serious head injury would result) of 3,56 meters. A double layer had a staggering reading of 13 metres.

We have found that in this application, second-hand tyres have a tendency to split along the tread under continual pressure of children jumping on them, so if used for this purpose they must be replaced as necessary.

Over the 15 years of our experiments with tyres we have generated many forms and types of equipment, but by far, our most ambitious and technically sophisticated project was to construct a lizard from car tyres. This structure began as a sculpture project involving a class of junior children and resulted in a 20 ft lizard which forms the centre of a maze. The lizard is based on the proportions of a real lizard and the tyre tread is evocative of the creature's flesh. It took two of us six weeks to make - the limbs are composed of tyres carefully cut and folded to conceal steel bracing ends and bolt heads. The lizard is a minotaur substitute in the centre of a playground maze.

Maintenance is important and needs to be thought about before you begin to build. If the selection of the tyres has been thorough, maintenance will be confined to replacing broken fixings. Your tyre structure can become part of your general maintenance inspection schedule which should be on a weekly basis, with a three-monthly full inspection and a yearly visit from an outside body. In general the tyres will need to have litter removed regularly and any blocked drain holes cleared.

A most important benefit to be gained from any self build project is the involvement of local people. People with varied levels of experience can come together and with good training and co-ordination, produce quality structures. The positive effects to children of seeing their parents and friends build play-structures for them is immeasurable and may be



Play leader working on tyres for structures

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"Truck Tyre Cube" - (Penton Primary School, Islington, London)

further enhanced by involving the children in the design and making of the equipment.

My purpose has been to indicate some of the most elementary aspects of the use of tyres for play constructions, with a desire to stimulate thinking rather than to supply instructions. Quality and safety will be achieved through rigorous attention to detail during all aspects of the planning and making process. I would suggest that the most useful way to begin with a project is to regard it as a prototype, which, if successful, can be developed further within a playground or within a neighbourhood.

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Lizard Model Primary School, Islington, London.

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"Play Structure, with tyre safety bed - (Primary School, Islington, London.

SUMMARY

Geraint John

THE USE OF SCHOOL SITES

School sites represent a huge resource for benefiting education and the community. In the past, school sites have been used for education purposes only and have been boring open space in concrete, tarmac and bland playing fields. Important studies have been carried out in Berlin, by the Department of Education & Science in Britain and at Leeds Polytechnic.

New concepts are examining the opportunity for landscaping school sites in a way that provides a variety of ways for children to understand plants, to be involved in planting and to provide pools and other features to examine nature. This also provides for a more interesting site with places to hide, for the essential privacy of children and for their imagination to flourish.

This also provides greater beauty for the school and greater beauty for the housing areas which overlook the school, often in visually poor areas.

This can also involve parents and the Community. The use by the Community out of school hours is an administrative and resource problem which needs to be solved. The 'European School Caretaker' is a huge problem which needs to be resolved. It is not easy to solve.

At the moment, the emphasis is on bringing parents and outside members of the Community into the school as part of the education process. Let us hope that full community use will result eventually.

Traditional schools in Berlin have successfully used courtyards open to the public which provide open space used by pupils and children. This traditional concept, it is hoped, can be stretched to lead to a more comprehensive concept of modern school sites.

It is not a costly approach. The efforts and skills of the community can be tapped as well as those of pupils and teachers. It will need training and instruction for teachers.

PROJECTS IN ISLINGTON

Islington is a densely populated inner London Borough with very little open space and few parks. Imaginative approaches by the Islington

Sunflowers - how high am I?

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Schools Project have been developed to involve artists and others in a variety of low-budget schemes.

One of the most interesting projects has involved the careful study of the use of a resource produced by our industrial society, available free and in great quantities - used car tyres.

The physical properties and performance of car tyres have been studied so that safe structures of a wide range of possibilities can be created.

COMMUNITY SCHEMES

'Community Architecture' is a phenomenon of recent years that began in the UK. It involves the designer in a dialogue with the community so that schemes can be developed in partnership and as a result of community participation. It is a 'bottom-up' approach. It is the opposite of the 'top down' traditional approach, whereby planners and public authorities decide remotely on schemes for the public good, and which, particularly in the area of post-war housing, has produced schemes which have failed to satisfy public satisfaction. Suoh housing schemes often involving prefabricated methods have begun to be demolished, or vastly remodelled and 'humanised'.

REGENERATION

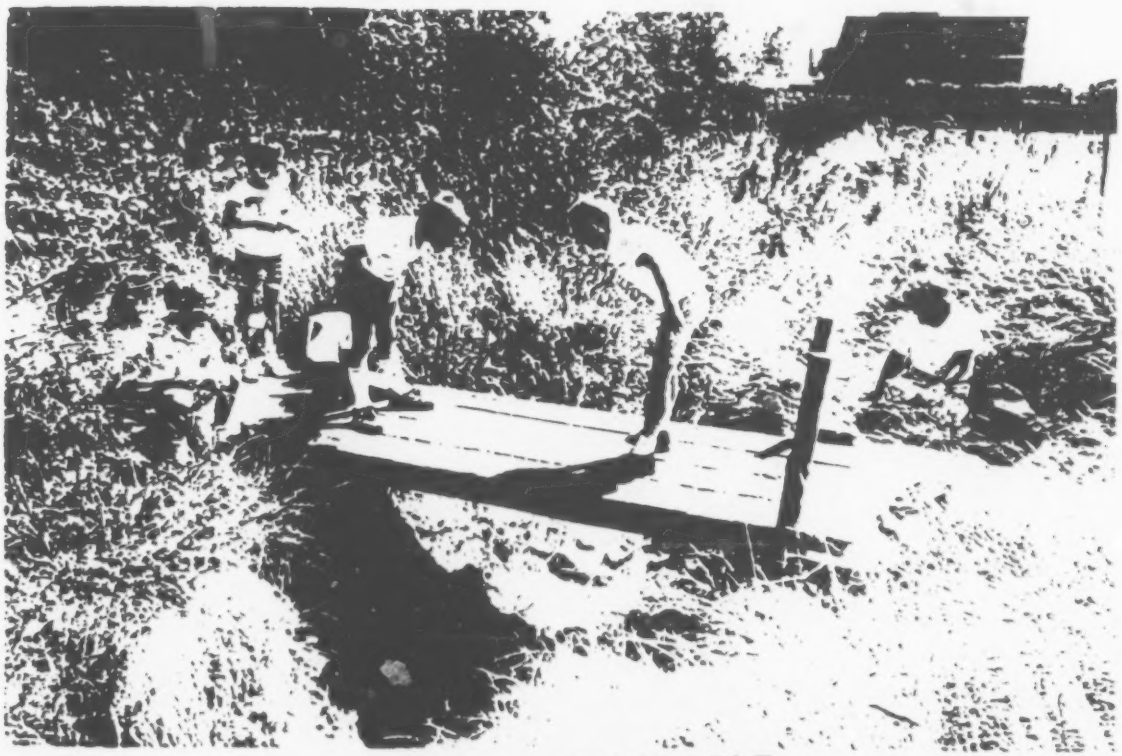
Regeneration of inner city areas is an attempt to bring back people into the inner city and to stem the flow of people outwards. It involves providing jobs in industry, but also the creating the kind of environment with green areas, parks and sports and recreational facilities. Cities like Rotterdam and Glasgow are examples where this kind of thinking is going on.

Glasgow has achieved much with schemes like its GEAR project, involving inner city regeneration. However, vandalism and attitudes are still a problem which are not going to be solved overnight. It will take a great deal of time, but the process is necessary and a start has been made.

THE CAMLEY STREET, LONDON, EXAMPLE

The Camley Street scheme is an example of a derelict industrial area near a canal and railway years which has been landscaped into an urban park, involving the kind of planting and facilities which are educational and a delight to children. It uses the kind of planting which is found in building sites and urban areas. It is used by schools and by the public.

Wild flowers - to draw, to touch, to smell, to describe



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Drama - the Billy Goats Gruff battle it out over the bridge

It has been very successful, but is now threatened by city redevelopment on a large scale. The community is trying to fight for its survival.

There are many such schemes involving those in American deprived city areas.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with local businesses are the feature of some schemes which involve funding from the private sector. The new City Technology colleges in the UK are an experiment to bring in about 20% or so from local businesses to create a new kind of technical training. They also are trying to bring in the community with regard to sports and recreational craft and arts users.

SMALL COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTRES

Part of this process of provision involves providing centres for small communities. The UK Sports Council has experimented with small multi-purpose centres, catering for sport and a wide range of community users, for small village scale populations of 3,000 to 6,000 people. The basis is a hall of badminton court dimensions, with an ancillary space together with changing, kitchen and back-up spaces.

There is also need for such centres in inner city village communities: an experiment has been built in Sheffield in a housing estate of a deprived community.

Such centres need to be planned for flexible use and be provided with plenty of storage.

CONCLUSIONS

There are many approaches which are being explored to solve the problem of raising the quality of life and the environment in deprived areas. It is hoped that some of the ideas put forward in this paper will have given some clues which can be followed up.

More time, consideration and consultation is inevitable; more input from the architects, landscape architects and social workers will be needed.

There must be no contradiction between dense living and the greening of areas.

The provision of education buildings and sites offer a great opportunity for new initiatives with the community and new ways to stimulate children's play and education.

Geraint John
The Sports Council
18th April, 1989

APPENDIX

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SUNNINGDALE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

BROCK CARMICHAEL ASSOCIATES and BCA LANDSCAPE in association with WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL.

APPENDIX

SUNNINGDALE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION:

Sunningdale Community Development is the result of a dramatic transformation of a previously dilapidated, vandalised and unpopular housing site within the Sandbrook Estate in Wirral.

Within a development that provides new and upgraded housing for the elderly, a range of communal and social facilities have been integrated to create a positive focus for those living both in the scheme and in the immediate neighbourhood.

The important need for a new community and social focus was recognised from inception and the design seeks to naturally encourage a wide social interaction and participation, whilst at the same time ensuring an attractive and secure environment for the Sunningdale residents.

BACKGROUND:

Sandbrook Estate in Moreton, Wirral, dating from the 1960s consists primarily of six hundred dwellings of two and three storey residential accommodation and includes four fourteen-storey tower blocks, two schools and a small shopping precinct.

One of the tower blocks, the shopping percent and a three-storey maisonette block formed the basis of the one and a half acre site which was to become the Sunningdale Community Development. Blighted with many of the problems commonly associated with developments of this era, lack of identity, poor supervision,inadequate security and no control over vehicular or pedestrian movement, the site was prone to vandalism and general mis-use. The shopping precinct, with severe security problems and lack of passing trade, had several vacant tenancies. The maisonette block, raised off the ground on "pilotis" and with an impersonal external access staircase was insecure and unpopular. The tower block, with stark internal corridors, lack of communal facilities and poor environmental control was bleak and suffered constant mis-use due to inadequate security provision.

Bonded brickwork feature carried throughout the development incorporating shops, flats, community centre & boundary wall, providing continuity & identity to disparate elements within the development

Existing tower block given full external refurbishment treatment and adapted internally for the ambulant elderly. New upgraded kitchens and bathrooms, services, heating, plumbing & security systems. Ground floor utility areas include new laundrette, hairdressing salon. New entrance hall and communal lounge incorporated within new bonded brickwork plinth

Existing shops removed and **new two storey, bedroom flats** constructed. Ground floor for the disabled, with raised planters in private gardens to rear, first floor for the ambulant elderley with private balconies overlooking garden court

Perimeter planting to secure boundary containing development

Restricted secure service area to rear of new shops for refuse and maintenance

Controlled service access for refuse, staff parking and emergency services

Garden court with private car parking areas. Impact of car parking reduced through strong structure landscaping with communal gardens incorporating several seating areas, wooden trellising & summer house

Four new shop units with glazed canopy arrangement to forecourt serviced and approached from outside protected boundary

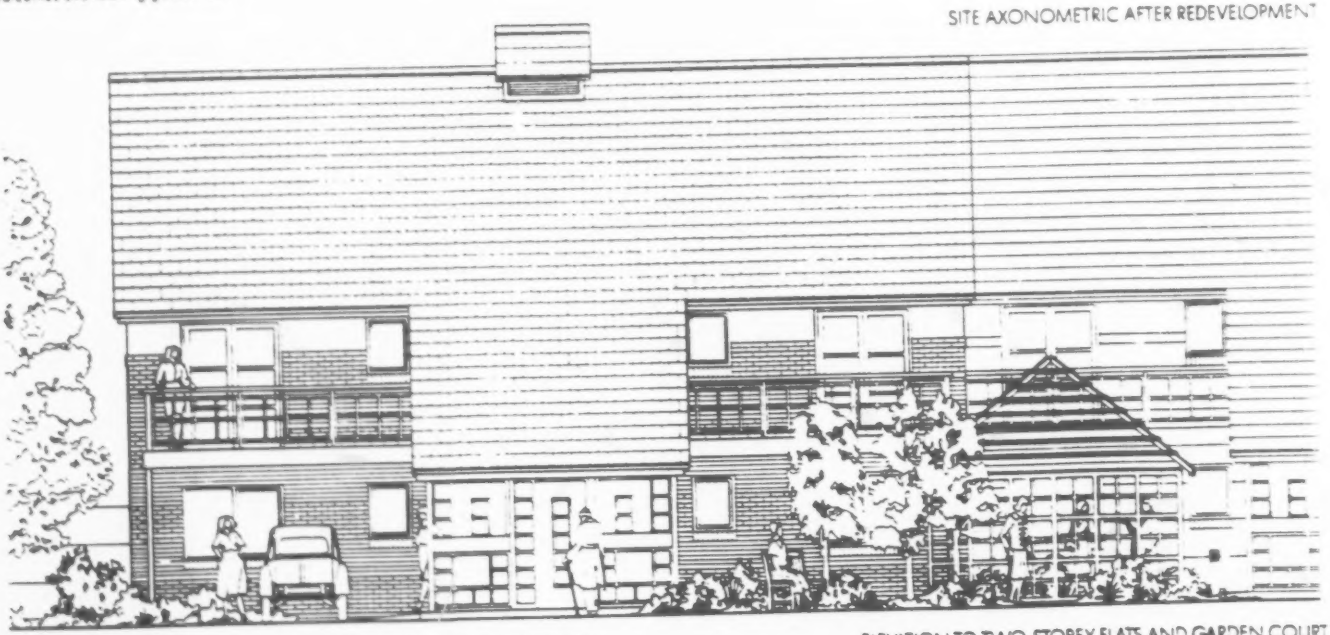
Landscape buffer to perimeter

Gatehouse incorporating local community centre and glazed security lodge with C.C.T.V. monitors

Existing maisonettes demolished and **new two storey, one bedroom flats** constructed. Ground floor for the disabled, with private gardens to rear, first floor for the ambulant elderley with private balconies overlooking garden court

Controlled single access for vehicles and pedestrians into court. All access points to buildings are ramped. Use of low kerb allows freedom of pedestrian movement

SITE AXONOMETRIC AFTER REDEVELOPMENT



ELEVATION TO TWO-STOREY FLATS AND GARDEN COURT

SUNNINGDALE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

BROCK CARMICHAEL ASSOCIATES and BCA LANDSCAPE in association with WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL.

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The site generally lacked privacy and identity, was unsupervised and suffered regular abuse.

Whilst much of the site lay barren and many of the facilities provided within the original development had been abandoned, two specific amenities had survived. The obvious need for a retail provision serving the immediate community had ensured that a small number of retail outlets had occupied two of the abandoned and dilapidated retail units, providing much needed community services including a creche and basic leisure/recreational facilities. These were to become essential ingredients in the creation of the Sunningdale Community Development.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRIEF

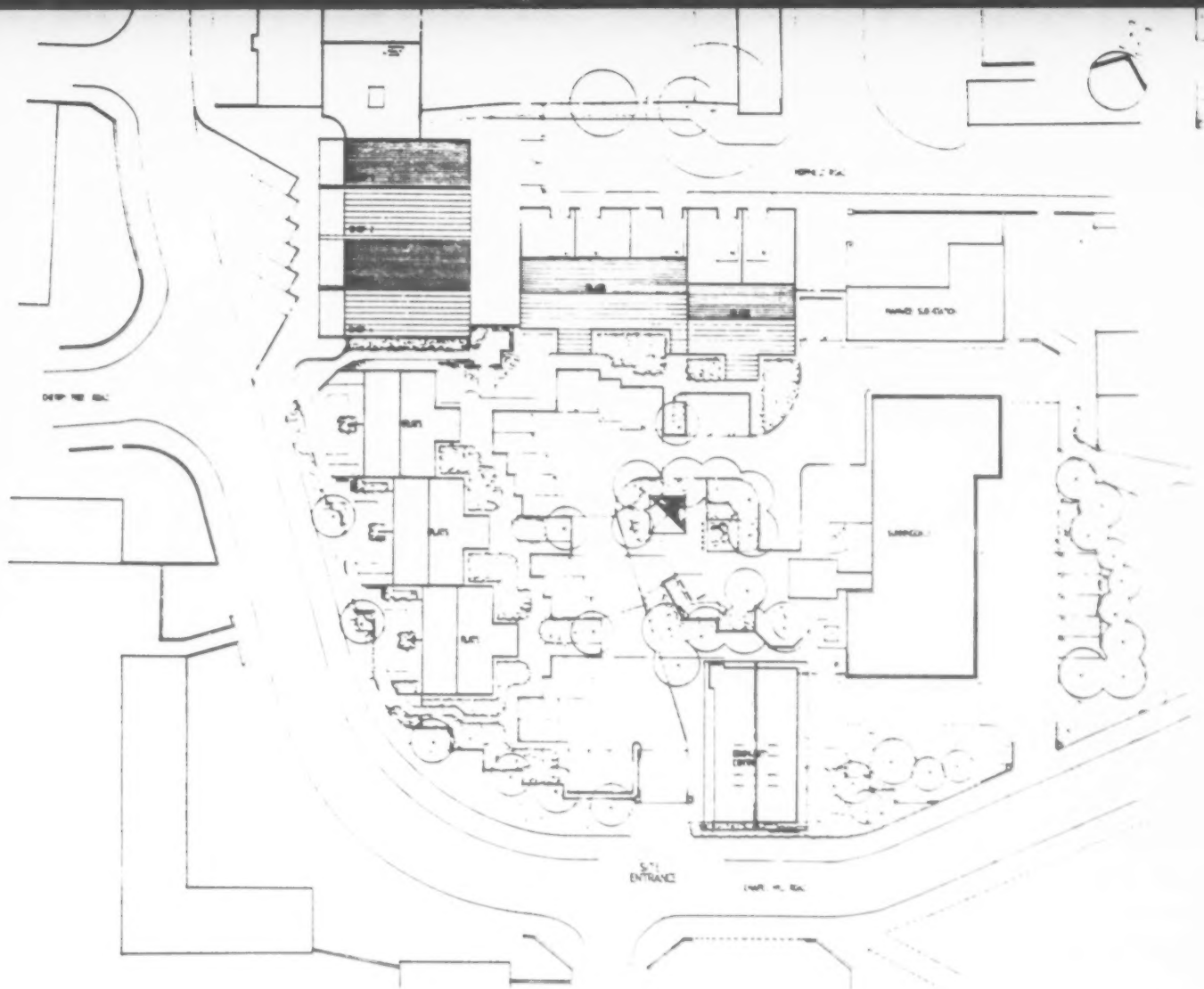
Throughout the design process, Brock Carmichael Associates, BCA Landscape and Officers of Wirral Borough Council worked closely on all aspects of the scheme.

In an attempt to develop an appropriate design strategy and brief, a process of consultations with the local community was established. Research confirmed that in addition to the sheltered housing accommodation proposed for the site, a small retail provision should be retained and that the services provided by the Sandbrook Community Association should be extended through the provision of a new community centre serving the entire Sandbrook Estate.

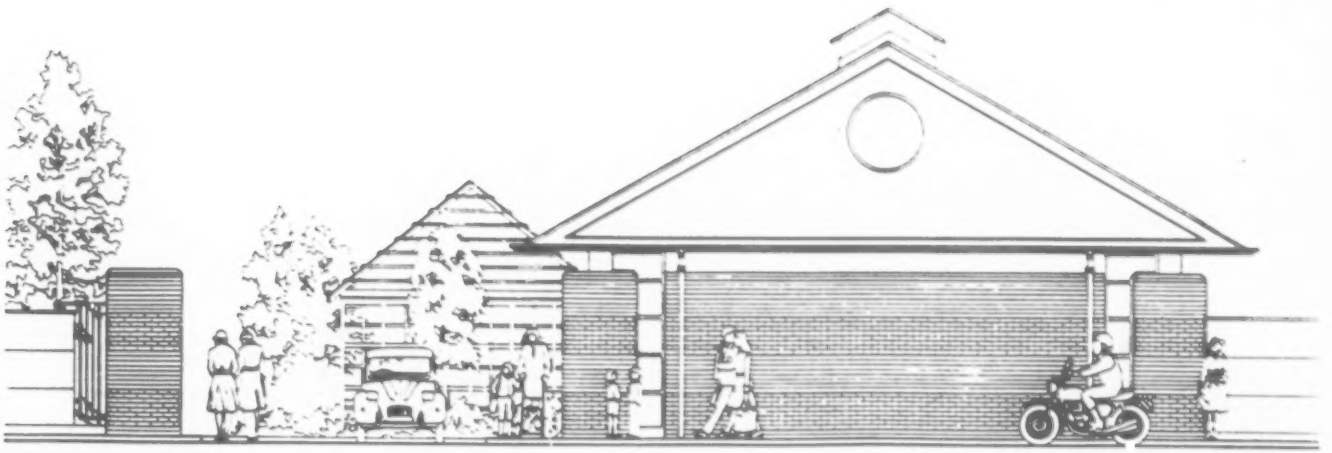
Alternative strategies for the site were investigated, including refurbishment of the existing facilities. It quickly became apparent, however, that radical physical and environmental changes would be required. It was equally clear that for the long-term success of any new development to be ensured a firm and extensive commitment on behalf of Wirral Borough Council in respect of a high level management and maintenance programme would be an essential ingredient. It was thus decided to demolish the maisonette block, integrating it into a new development within which the essential support facilities for the management programme would be clearly established.

Thereafter, the object was to create a carefully sculptured and landscaped environment, responsive to the communal, social and security needs of the elderly, yet accessible in varying degrees to the surrounding community.

THE DESIGN SOLUTION



SITE PLAN



SUNNINGDALE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ELEVATION TO COMMUNITY CENTRE AND SITE ENTRANCE

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The development seeks to provide a powerful and identifiable focal point within the Sandbrook Estate, but one which does not alienate itself from the surrounding community. An important element in achieving this is the use of a strong architectural discipline throughout the scheme, a appropriate architectural identity. Moreover, a sensitive placing of the various elements within the development allows varying degrees of interaction with the wide community.

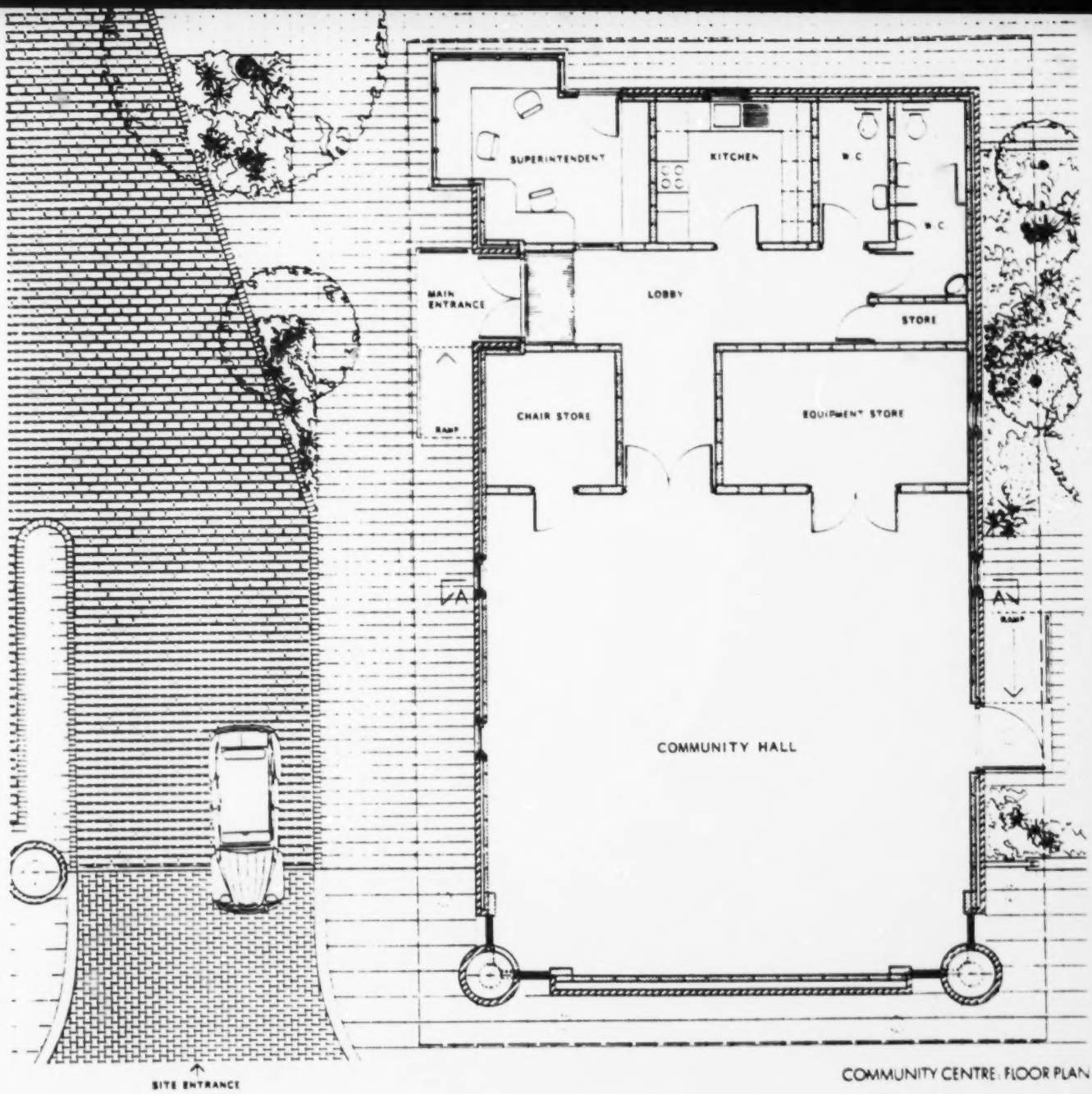
The new shopping arcade, which forms part of the secure boundary to the site, is independently accessible to Sandbrook Estate as a whole, while remaining convenient for Sunningdale residents.

The Community Centre reflects its opportunities for wider social interaction by forming a gatehouse to the site entrance equally accessible to both Sunningdale residents and local people. Designed to wheelchair standards, it contains a community hall, kitchen, office and stores, it also houses the Security Lodge. Deliberately moderate in size, it reflects the tradition of the village hall and provides for a range of social activities appropriate to its specific location.

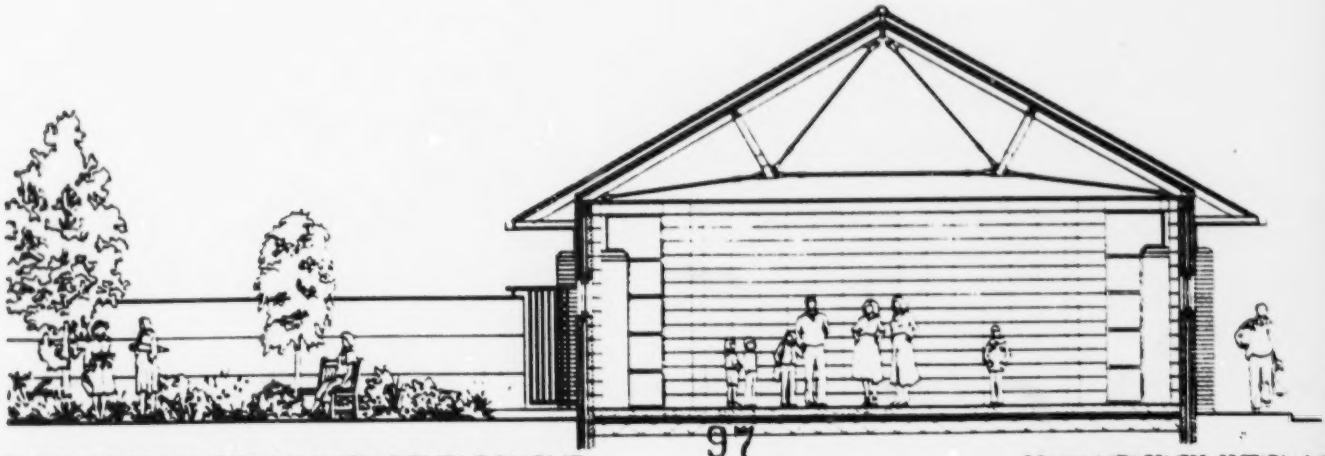
These include dancing, keep fit, play groups, a creche, youth clubs, dinners for the elderly as well as private functions. Establishing the correct scale of community provision was extremely important in giving an appropriate reflection of the specific needs of the community. More extensive leisure facilities are available within the Sandbrook Estate in the two existing schools.

The sheltered housing development is concentrated within the secure site boundary. The existing tower block has been converted into sheltered housing for the ambulant elderly. This block, and two groups of new two-storey sheltered flats form three sides of a shared Garden Court. Within the tower block, a communal lounge has been formed on the ground floor through careful manipulation of openings within the structural walls. With a seating capacity of fifty, it also has a kitchen and servery. The space actively used for casual social interaction, and games of cards, darts, bingo etc., a birthday party or a wedding anniversary are regular occurrences. An independent Residents association has been established to organise more formal activities, excursions and social events. In addition, a free laundrette, a hairdressing salon and first aid room are provided.

It was the specific intention of the design team not to dictate the way in which communal facilities should be used, but rather to create a range of



COMMUNITY CENTRE: FLOOR PLAN



COMMUNITY CENTRE: SECTION A/A

SUNNINGDALE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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opportunities within the development for communal activities and social interaction. However, it was considered essential to carefully plan the towards alienation or isolation.

A good example of this philosophy is the treatment of the Garden Court and its associated elements. High quality and familiar materials have been used throughout the development such as natural roof sites, subtle tones of brick, and stained timber to encourage a sense of pride in the environment created.

Strong patterns and boldly contrasting colours, have been exploited in the planting so that those residents with poor eyesight and those living on upper floors can appreciate the landscape. In contrast to the original development where the emphasis had been on simplicity, producing bland surfaces and buildings, there is a richness in the articulation of form and space and a variety of detail.

The plants chosen have the rich colours of nostalgic smells of a Victorian cottage garden: rhododendrons, mulberry, lavender, lilacs and herbaceous plants are placed in areas screened from wind by protective evergreen hedges.

A central focus of the garden Court is a sitting area formed with trellised screens and an open summer house over which many varieties of highly scented climbing roses and clematis will grow.

The detailing of the trellis-work and the summer house are reflected in the balconies and entrances in the adjacent flats, thus creating an integrated environment on a deliberately human scale.

The arrangements of pedestrian paths, the design of outside seating areas and private balconies encourage residents to enjoy the communal gardens from both within their flats and within the gardens themselves; and provide for informal social contact, through short walks or just "taking the air" .

The ground floor flats have protected semi-private gardens to the rear with raised planting areas to enable individual gardening for disabled or elderly residents.

The success of the Garden Court can already been seen in the scale of participation on any moderately sunny day. Residents have begun to establish their own feature planting areas within the specific parts of the site. In the existing tower block, where communal areas and corridors have been re-styled and carpeted, a warm and comfortable environment has been created here again and throughout the scheme, a high degree of

personalisation by residents has also developed with the use of their own plants and possessions.

CONCLUSION

Sunningdale Community Development is the successful result of a sympathetic and responsive design approach in which the individual, communal, social leisure requirements of the various aspects of the community to which it relates have been addressed in conjunction with the basic design requirements. In contrast to the original site and buildings which suffered inherent problems, Sunningdale Community Development now has the successful base of a new management structure as well as a renewed environment and social confidence, both of which we all hope will continue to develop and mature.